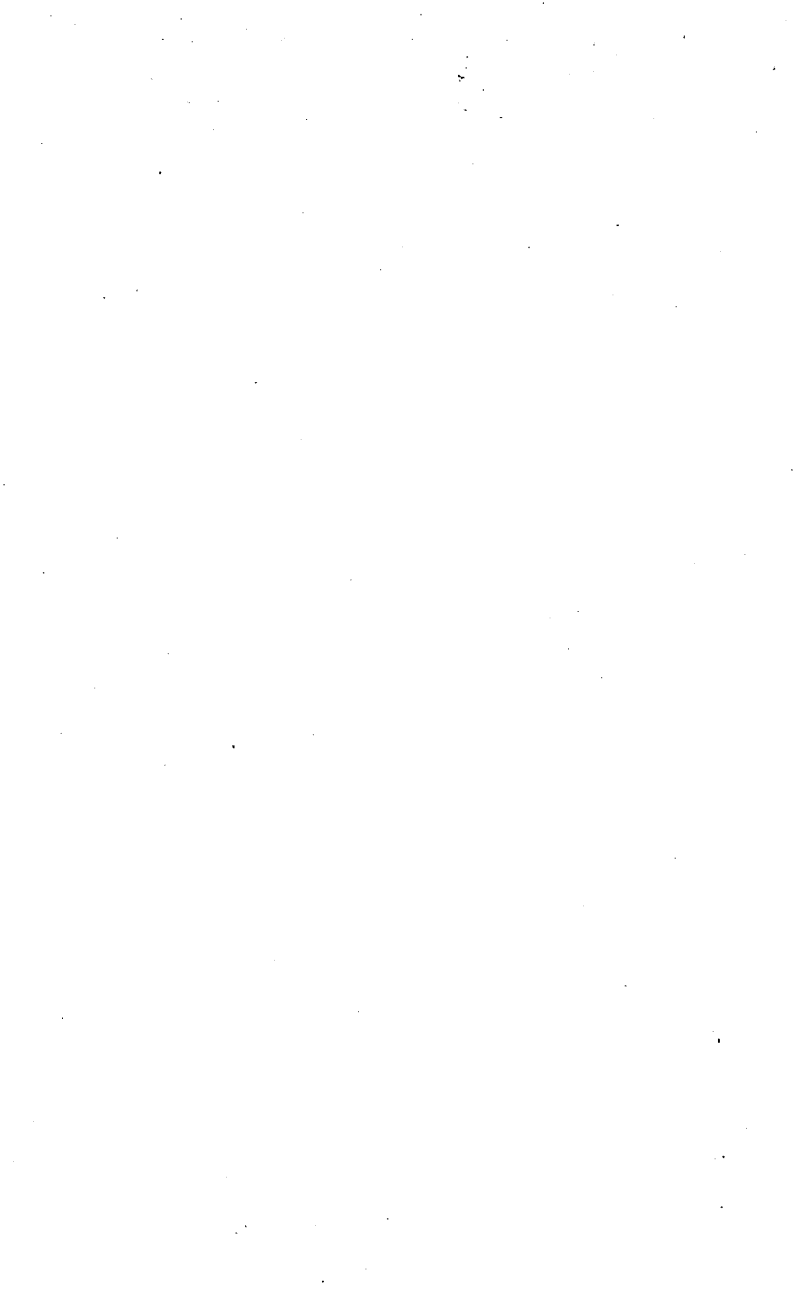
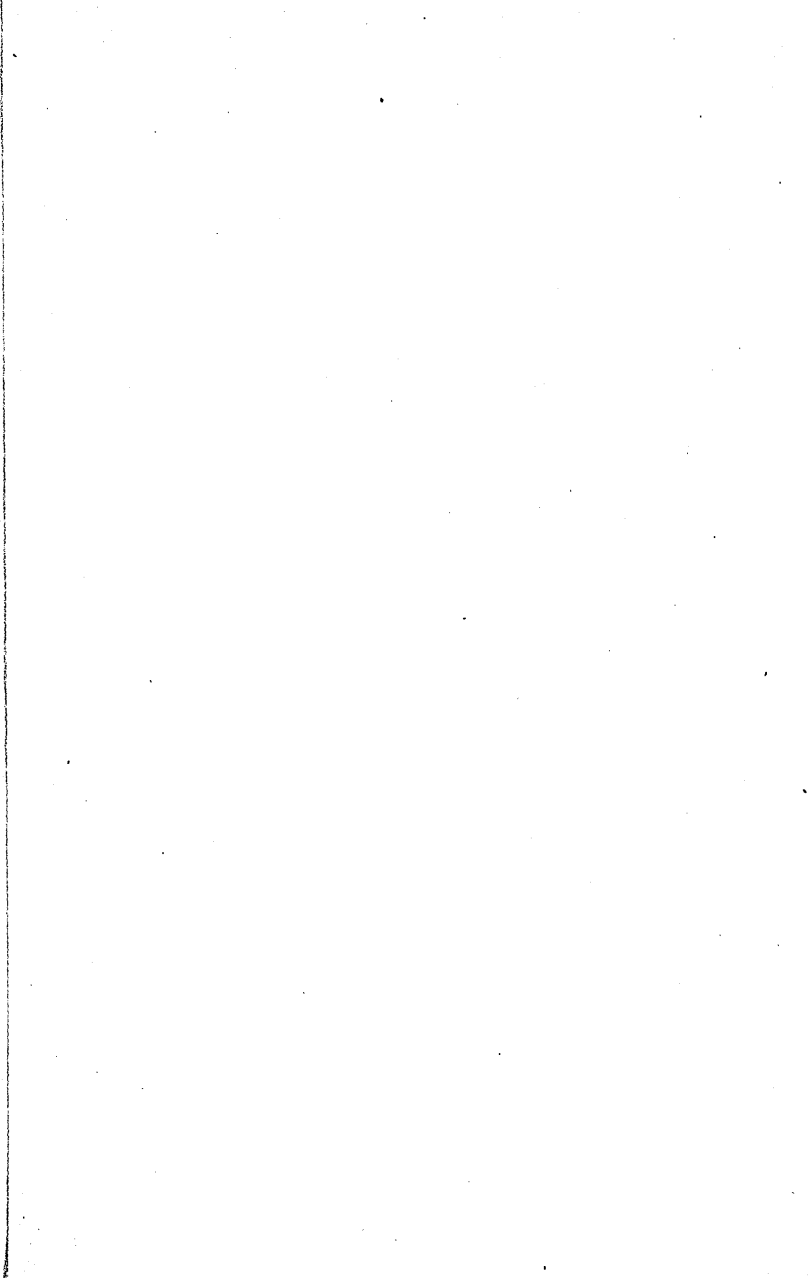


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# SIMON THE ZEALOT

*By the same author*

FAITH AND HISTORY  
THE WARFARE OF RECONCILIATION  
THE RACE PROBLEM AND THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST  
THE GREAT FORERUNNER  
HISTORY AS DIRECTION  
ETC.

# SIMON THE ZEALOT

BY

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*M.A., F.R.Hist.Soc.*

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# SIMON THE ZEALOT

## PART II

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## FOREWORD

THE purpose of this book is, in the first place, to show how Christ must have seemed to the Jewish nationalists of his day, and especially to the man in the inner circle of his disciples whom we know from his name—Simon the Zealot—to have been a strong nationalist. In the second place, the purpose of this book is to show the practical implications of Christ's ideal of Reconciliation for the concrete problems of his own day, which in many ways are strikingly similar to the concrete problems of the modern world.

The author believes that the picture here given of the political setting of Christ's life is in the main accurate. Two quotations may perhaps be given in this connection. "That in Galilee . . . for the great mass of the people, the kingdom meant the restoration of temporal sovereignty there can be little doubt."<sup>1</sup> "Judaism is a national life, a life which the national religion and human ethical principles (the ultimate object of every religion) embrace without engulfing. Jesus came and thrust aside all the requirements of the national life; it was not that he set them apart and relegated them to their separate sphere in the life of the nation; he ignored them completely; in their stead he set up nothing but an ethico-religious system bound up with his conception of the Godhead. In the self-same moment he both annulled *Judaism* as the *life-force* of the Jewish nation, and also the nation itself as a nation. For a religion which possesses only a certain conception of God and a morality acceptable

<sup>1</sup> Headlam, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, p. 250.

to *all* mankind does not belong to any special nation, and consciously or unconsciously breaks down the barrier of nationality. This inevitably brought it to pass that his people, Israel, rejected him."<sup>1</sup>

This latter quotation is of great interest, as coming from a modern Jewish scholar of profound learning and insight.

It may also be pointed out that in the Psalms of Solomon,<sup>2</sup> written rather more than a generation before the birth of Christ and representative of the thought and feeling of his time, the Messianic rule was looked for as a national and secular emancipation.

It may perhaps be added that no one who has lived, as the author has done, for years in the midst of an Oriental people under the influence of a strong nationalist movement will feel that the picture of nationalism here given is exaggerated.

The matter in this book was first given day by day to Hindu students, many of whom were dressed in the white homespun of the out-and-out Indian nationalist.

J. S. H.

<sup>1</sup> Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Times, His Life, and His Teaching*.

<sup>2</sup> See Sells, *The Apocalypses*, p. 77; and compare also the recognition by the Pharisees of John Hyrcanus as Messiah, for which see Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, p. 282.

PART I  
BEGINNINGS



## THE BIRTH OF JESUS

THE streets of the little hill-town were filled with discontented and seditious crowds. Why had the hateful Roman government thought fit to order this census? Everybody knew that it was designed solely in order to enable the Emperor to impose upon them yet another of his odious taxes. Why had Herod been such a truckling fool as to have agreed to follow the instructions of his imperial master? Here they were, drawn from the four corners of the land—some of them had travelled for a week to reach Bethlehem—and what was happening to their fields and their workshops at home? Besides, the place being the headquarters of a tribe, it was insufferably crowded. There was no accommodation to be had anywhere. How were they to get food and shelter? How long would it take to get registered? Everyone knew the tricks of these petty officials. Very probably they would keep them all waiting till they were half starved, and then only register them on payment of a heavy bribe. It was all the fault of this hateful foreign domination. When, oh when, would God send the Deliverer—the Messiah—the Hero, who would purge the land of these pagan tyrants and extortioners, aye and purge it too of these half-pagan Herodian despots with their foreign ways? When, oh when would he come, the Messiah?

And so the talk came round once more, as it always did in Palestine at that time, to the Hope of the Nation—the coming Saviour, the Redeemer, who should drive Rome and Rome's satellites to Hell, and set up the Kingdom of the Jews over all the world.



Through the snarling hubbub of the crowds came a travel-stained peasant, leading his young wife, and asking from man to man, and from house to house, in his broad northern brogue, for food and shelter. Plainly the woman was half dead with fatigue; but his questions raised merely a laugh. There was no hope of food or shelter in Bethlehem that night, or for many nights to come.

Desperate with anxiety, Joseph went on asking, till he had been to nearly every house in the town. Some turned him away with scorn, because he was poor and dusty. The Pharisees gave him short shrift, for they knew that poor men like this wanderer scarcely ever kept the Law as it should be kept. One or two of the poorer sort of householder answered him kindly and civilly, but the answer was always the same—there was no room. Some even added that there would be no room even for the Messiah, were he to come that night! Some, seeing Mary's need, demanded much money for a little space within doors. But Joseph had no money.

And so it was in the corner of a broken-down stable behind the inn, amidst a throng of travellers' beasts, rejected and despised, poor and a wanderer, amid curses against the foreign tyrant and frantic hopes of an insurrectionary Messiah, that the Lord of Reconciliation came amongst men.

## THE SHEPHERDS

"I AM an old man now, and I was young then. But I shall never forget that night. We were out on the mountains to the south over there, about three miles away, in a little fold of the hills where the force of the bitter wind was broken—I still remember how bitter the wind was that night. There was a rough wall of stones, and the sheep were huddled behind it. And we shepherds had made a fire to keep ourselves warm. I can see it all still—the keen bright stars overhead, and the flickering light of the fire, and the sleeping sheep, and the rough stones of the wall, and my comrades wrapped in their blankets. We were unable to sleep for the cold, and so we cowered close over the fire and talked.

"I can even remember what we were talking about. It had started, of course, with the census, and the crowds of strangers in Bethlehem. That had naturally brought us on to the Roman tyranny, and to the desperate need for the Messiah to come swiftly and save the nation. Those were the days of Herod, who had no thoughts above keeping his throne safe by toadying to Augustus. Many said, you know, that he—the Deliverer—would come from our own town; and we chaffed each other, saying that perhaps one of ourselves was the man. Everywhere the people were talking like that in those days.

"But then the talk had turned to the prices of food, and to the poor money which we got for our sheep and their wool; and I fear my brother and I were quarrelling about some money we had made that day

by selling one of our sheep—I was claiming more than half, because he had been sick for two or three months that year, and so had not done his fair share of looking after the flock.

“Suddenly there came the *shekinah* light blazing all round us, and we fell to the ground. I remember how frightened I was, and how much I wished that I had not said the hard and covetous things to my brother which I had just been saying. We heard the Voice telling us that he, the Messiah, was really and truly born that night in our city. And then we heard that heavenly chorus—such beauty of song as I could never describe to you; but such strange impossible words for a welcoming hymn to the Messiah—Peace and Goodwill amongst men! We were too much frightened at the time to notice it much; but we remembered the words; and as we ran to the town with our presents, such as they were, to be the first to do him honour, we discussed it breathlessly amongst ourselves. Peace and Goodwill on earth for him who is to be the warrior lord of our conquering race, and to bring destruction upon the alien unbelievers—a strange greeting indeed!

“I remember well our hunt through the town for any house in which there might be a new-born baby, and our bitter disappointment when we failed to find one, and then towards morning the stable, and our renewed disappointment, for there was nothing regal or Messiah-like in that stable. However, there was no other new-born child in the whole town, so this must be he; and we made him our little offerings—a young sheep from two of our comrades, a sheepskin coat from two more, and from my brother and myself

some of the money which we had got from the sale of the sheep on the previous day.

“It was soon over. As we hurried back to our sheep we discussed those words over and over again—Peace and Goodwill amongst men as a greeting for the Messiah—the Messiah who was to chastise the heathen and the oppressor! Surely the angels must have made a mistake!”

## THE BOY IN THE TEMPLE

THE morning sun shone full upon the little group in the Temple portico, whose rich marbles flashed and sparkled in the blaze.

The boy, with his keen eager face, was standing in a circle of white-bearded Rabbis. Simply and without self-consciousness, but very earnestly, he was questioning them about God and God's will for the nation. He listened gravely and attentively to their replies; and then would put some further question, whose insight and discernment caused the old men to gaze at one another in astonishment.

Jesus was absorbed in the interest of discovering what these great and famous teachers really thought about God and man. By now he had learnt in the village school at Nazareth the great ideas on these things which had been given to the world by the heroes and prophets of the past history of his race. Already he had pondered deeply over the long records of their teachings. And now that he had come to an age when a Jew was called "son of the Law", and was required to keep the ordinances of the Law—now that he had this first opportunity of drinking at the fountain-source of the national religion—now that he was in Jerusalem and in the Temple at last—he had forgotten everything else except his passionate yearning to find out what men thought and knew about God. For already he had learnt that the most important thing for individual, community, or nation is—not economic prosperity or political freedom or any such thing—but just what they think about God.

Suddenly there was a wild cry from the other side of the courtyard. A peasant woman rushed across, followed by her tall, bronzed husband. With a torrent of words, in which anger, anxiety, and joy were mixed pell-mell, she threw herself upon Jesus, and hugged him tightly to her breast. He was found at last, and after such a terrible, despairing search! For there were still many hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in the little old city.

Why, oh why had he given them such a fearful shock, and caused them such infinite trouble?

"But, Mother," said Jesus, "why did you need to be so anxious? Surely you knew where you might find me—in my Father's house, busy learning about Him."

Then, bidding farewell to his Rabbi friends, who were much amused when they saw his parents and heard their thick northern accent, Jesus went away with them—back to the long silent years at Nazareth.

All through those silent years the same ambition possessed him which had led to the incident in the Temple. He desired ever more earnestly to abide in his Father's house, and to learn about him.

But his Father's house came to mean more to him than the Temple at Jerusalem. It came to mean the hills, the birds, the flowers, the sunset, the hearts of his friends—the whole wide world.

## THE BAPTISM

THE whole country was filled with a fervour of excitement. God, after all, had not forgotten His people. After so many weary years He had sent a Prophet again. And a true Prophet. A man of the desert, fierce, wild, unkempt, ascetic, speaking burning words with a new note of divine authority. From the four corners of the land the crowds went forth to hear him, not merely the religious people who were already yearning for these things, but the peasants in their thousands, and even the traitorous tax-collectors and the rough foreign soldiery. All day long the banks of the swift-flowing, mud-coloured Jordan were thronged with listeners ; and all day long the voice of the prophet rose high, bidding them to make their hearts ready for imminent crisis. He spoke of swiftly approaching judgment. He urged them to repent, that they might be pure in God's coming day. He told each group of them how they might show the true proofs of repentance. He baptized them by the thousand, in sign that they had comprehended and accepted his message. And still they came, those unending crowds, thronging down the steep tracks from the uplands to the deep, hot trench of the Jordan valley, filled with an unquenchable zeal and an uncontrollable excitement.

For the words had gone forth all over the land that this must be the Man, the Messiah. And in that age, in Palestine, the mere rumour that the Messiah had come was enough to root people up from their homes at a few minutes' notice, and to send them hastening a hundred difficult miles to see him.

But no—John would have nothing to do with Messiah-hood. "I am not the man," said he. "I am only a Forerunner. But do not be disappointed. He is coming. He is coming very soon. And when he comes, then you will see that Great Day of judgment and power, of which I have been telling you."

Thus, day by day, as the people listened to John, the excitement grew. He might not be the Messiah himself; but he was clearly a great prophet—a prophet of truth; and he said that the Messiah was coming, coming almost at once.

Then quietly, secretly, Jesus also came down the winding tracks from Nazareth. He had left the old home for ever. The work that he must do lay heavy on him.

He came to John, amidst a crowd of other peasant folk, at a time when an uncounted multitude pressed upon the prophet for his baptism.

John baptized him, and saw the sign from heaven which told him that this was the Anointed of the Lord, who should deliver his people.

But when he told the multitudes of it, prophet though he was, they laughed at him. For who could believe that God's Hero-King would come amongst them unnoticed, a peasant, one of themselves, and submit to the sign which meant repentance from sin and readiness for salvation? Were there not a hundred passages in their Scriptures to show that the Messiah would be manifested with power and great glory, the rending of the clouds and the destruction of the ungodly? Why, even John himself had spoken thus of his coming!

How could this humble peasant be the Messiah?



## SIMON THE ZEALOT

They laughed. Prophets were great and wonderful men, but clearly at times they were apt to become a little unbalanced!

But John told them roundly that, prophet though he was, he was not worthy to perform for this unknown peasant the lowest of all menial services. He was not worthy to unlatch Jesus' sandal, though this was the one and only personal service for their religious preceptor from which pupils were specifically and proverbially exempt!

When they heard that, the people only laughed at John the more.

## THE FIRST TEMPTATION

THE dawn was just beginning to break over the desert. All around were the dimly seen shapes of jagged mountains. Above burned the great eastern stars. Far to the north-west was a belt of cloud-mist rising from the Lake. From a near-by gully came the snarling shout of jackals.

It was deadly cold, there in the desert—though after a few brief hours the heat would be insupportable.

Alone, up and down the crest of a mountain-ridge, there swiftly paced the figure of a man. He passed to and fro across the stars, and as the flush in the eastern sky grew brighter his figure stood out clear and gaunt on the skyline.

As he paced he muttered aloud to himself; and every now and then a sharp cry of inward agony cut across the silence.

He had been here alone in the desert for weeks, hungrily worshipping God, eagerly drinking in union of heart and will with God. He had faced the meaning of God for the world: His meaning for the needs of that time and of the future. He had discerned what his own life meant and how it must be lived.

In those silent days he had come to know the power of God which was given to himself.

And now, before he went back to the world which was to be redeemed, he must decide how that divine power, which flowed through him, might best be employed for the founding of God's Kingdom.

Yet it was hard for him just at this time to think of these things. For many days he had been fasting.

## SIMON THE ZEALOT

His nights had been spent in an agony of prayer. His body was worn out by the fierce and indomitable spirit which burned within it. As the sun rose above the horizon, he sank to the ground exhausted, for he was starving.

Suddenly, as he lay, he noticed the flat stones which lay thickly around him on the top of the ridge. They were just the shape and size of those toothsome cakes of flat bread which his mother used to bake, away in the little home at Nazareth. He gazed across to the low-lying cloud in the far north-west, which marked the Lake, and to the mountains faintly seen beyond it. How far away that quiet life seemed now! At this very moment she might be baking one of those flat cakes. She was always early up and at work. How hungry he was!

At the thought there flashed through his mind another thought, so sudden and clear as to seem like a voice from without. He knew that God's divine power was there at his command. He knew that he was commissioned and sent for God's work. He must keep his body healthy and strong, that God's will might be done. Surely, then, he might use this infinite power to give to himself the food which he needed so bitterly.

The temptation was fierce; for his hunger was sore upon him.

But would it stop there? If he used his God-given power to feed himself, that he might be strong for the Kingdom, would he not be tempted later to use it in other ways, not for the Kingdom, but for himself alone?

Never in thought or action—of this he was abso-

## THE FIRST TEMPTATION

lutely certain—must the power which God had given be used for himself.

And as for the food, God was with him and caring for him. God would provide all that was needful.

He banished the temptation from his mind, rose to his feet, and began once more his pacing up and down, wrapped in communion with his Father.

## THE SECOND TEMPTATION

It was full day now, and the burning sun beat down on the desert ridge, where still the Prophet paced to and fro. He did not notice the heat. The fierce hunger which had weakened him before seemed now to have passed from him.

He was still thinking untiringly about the work which lay ahead of him: about the necessity for telling men what God is like, and yet the entire impossibility of finding words wherewith to tell them; about the necessity for showing them the beauty and joyfulness of letting God's will rule in their lives, and yet the colossal obstacles in the way of showing them any such thing.

How, in the first place, could he get men to listen to his words at all? A peasant from the wild and ignorant North—how would those proud national leaders at Jerusalem have patience to listen to one word which he uttered? And even the common people—he knew their weaknesses as well as their strength. They were so suspicious of new things, so difficult to convince in their peasant cautiousness, so hard-headed, and yet sometimes so fickle. And then the Pharisees—they were eager enough about religion, but it was not the right kind of religion, and they were continually clamouring for a teacher's credentials, for a Sign, which should convince them that his message was really from God.

Suddenly—and again almost like a voice from without—an idea shot through his mind. This wonderful power which God had given him, might it not

## THE SECOND TEMPTATION

be used, and used rightly, for the giving of some absolutely unmistakable Sign—a Sign which should immediately silence all criticism, and bow all hearts before him in reverent acknowledgment of his divine mission?

The Passover crowds would be gathering in Jerusalem from the four corners of the earth in a few weeks' time. On the great day of the feast he would climb to the highest point of the Temple roof. There would be a blast of angelic trumpets to draw all eyes to his figure up there. And then he would hurl himself down to the courtyard below, and the angels would catch him and keep him from hurt. There was even scriptural authority which might be held to justify such a magnificent demonstration of triumphant faith!

A Sign like that—well he knew it—would compel attention from the national leaders, the rich and powerful party of the High Priests. It would compel not merely a respectful hearing, but zealous obedience from the Pharisees, the men of religion. And as for the common people—it would compel from them a slavish and idolatrous obedience. He would be able to lead them in any direction he might like, and impose upon them any rule of righteousness he might think fit.

It was a splendid conception. In the twinkling of an eye the battle would be won; and men of every class and type, from all over the world, would be compelled by plain facts to listen and obey.

Aye, but there was that word "compelled". It would be compulsion, truly enough. It would not be through the free allegiance of their hearts that they

## SIMON THE ZEALOT

would come into a Kingdom of God thus inaugurated. They would be forced into the Kingdom, not indeed by the sword, but by stern fact, and by fact which would give them no alternative but to believe and tremble. And well he knew that men could never be forced to believe in God—the kind of God that God really was.

Besides, that was not the right way to treat God and the power which God had bestowed. To draw universal attention upon himself by a supreme exhibition of supernatural powers would be exploiting God and God's love. It would be putting God to the test, and then triumphantly exclaiming, "I told you so!" It would be degrading the highest and holiest things to the level of human incredulity and disbelief.

Men must be won to God by love and by love alone; and God must be loved for His own sake, not as a convenient form of personal certificate establishing the credentials of His messenger.

Jesus drove this temptation also from his mind.

## THE THIRD TEMPTATION

EVENING had fallen upon the desert. The last glow of the sunset was dying away over the mountains of Judaea, far in the west. The stars were already flaming overhead. The fierce heat of the day had gone and a bitter wind had arisen.

On his mountain ridge the young Prophet still paced to and fro. He was wrestling, as he had wrestled already for many days, with the problems which lay ahead of him in his lifework for God and the Kingdom of God.

He had thought long to-day about that phrase—the Kingdom of God. He knew well enough what it meant to the Galilean peasants amongst whom he had been brought up. One more insurrection, like so many in the past, but unlike them in that it would be successful. Rome would go. Their country would be freed. The Jews would become masters of the world. Jerusalem would be the capital of the whole earth. Their Holy Law would be enforced in all nations. Gentile sinners would be compelled to obey it. And it would all be carried through by the Messiah, the God-sent Hero and Leader and King, whose coming every Jew earnestly prayed for and expected.

The Prophet knew that he was sent by God; but was he to be a Messiah like that? It was an alluring prospect. Behind him, he knew, were incalculable stores of divine power. He could raise the country. He could drive the Romans into the sea. He could build the new Kingdom. He could make himself Master of the whole earth. He could rule all nations



## SIMON THE ZEALOT

in righteousness. He could enforce the observance of the Holy Law everywhere. . . .

Ah, there was the trouble—that little word “enforce”. The whole programme—clearly enough he saw it now—would be one of enforcement, one of compulsion. A Messiah like that might drive out Rome and rule the world. He might compel obedience to the Law; but would he, by so doing, show men what God is really like? Would he make men love God for His own sake? Would he teach them to desire and strive after goodness for its own sake? Would he show them the true beauty of love and reconciliation, so that they would for ever dwell together happily in God’s Kingdom of peace?

The way of political Messiah-hood was easy enough. In a few weeks the Kingdom of righteousness would be established. God would not fail him. Then he would reign for ever, and all men would have to be righteous. Only—it would not be real reigning, and it would not be real righteousness, for neither would be of the heart; both would be political, enforced.

No, he saw more and more plainly that the only righteousness worth the name was the righteousness which came from loving God and desiring to do His will; and that the only reigning which the true messenger of God might undertake was the reigning over men’s hearts in humility and self-sacrifice, because men had learnt to love Him.

At last the Prophet stood still, on the highest point of the ridge. He looked out over the darkening world. He saw what his decision meant. He saw that God’s way would be hard and dangerous. He saw the kingdoms and the glory of the other way.

## THE THIRD TEMPTATION

But God's way was the way for him.

He made his choice.

Doubts, perplexities, problems, fled away from him.

As the moon rose, he set out, rejoicing, for his work.

In that hour of his choice, between the sunset and the moonrise, the destiny of the world was decided.

## THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

THE huge colonnaded courtyard was filled with clamour and confusion. And yet it was designed by the Holy Law as a place where non-Jews might come for quiet meditation and prayer, where they might learn more about the true God.

The marble porticoes at the side of the courtyard were occupied by a host of petty hawkers. They had been given the right, by the priestly party, the Sadducees, to sell their goods there, on payment (of course) of suitable fees and commissions. At this time of pilgrimage they were driving a roaring trade in the various articles—and they were many—which were required for the right performance of the ceremonial sacrifices.

Tethered in corners, or hobbled in groups here and there over the courtyard, were the sacrificial animals. Soon their blood would be streaming from the barbaric altars within.

Elsewhere, scattered over the marble paving of the courtyard, were the little tables of the money-changers, with their neat piles of coins. Many thousands of pilgrims had business with these money-changers; for the Temple tribute might only be paid in Jewish money. It was a profitable business to be a Temple money-changer, and well worth the payment of a good commission to the priests; for the rate of exchange was always heavily in favour of the man at the table. It was absurd, though, what a fuss some of these peasant pilgrims made about the business! Why, some of them actually said that it

was a shame to make profit out of the Temple ceremonies at all!

Across two corners of the Temple ran short-cuts from one part of the city to another, and here were the sights and sounds of the streets: porters staggering along under huge bales of goods, passengers meeting and conversing in high-pitched voices, bargains being struck, and quarrels prosecuted.

Everywhere were swarms of children, running and shouting, and playing all manner of games.

The sum total of din was terrific, stupefying; and as for the possibility of non-Jews obtaining quiet here for prayer and meditation (they were not permitted to enter the more peaceful courts beyond), the very thought of such a thing was a mockery!

Suddenly there was a rushing of the crowd to one corner of the courtyard. Soon a surging vortex of humanity was gathered there, every man striving to see over the shoulders of those in front to what was going on in the centre of things. There were angry cries from the money-changers, the crash of falling tables, the rattle of coins on the marble floor, the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep as they were driven forth. There were shouts of protest from the shopkeepers. Above the tumult rose the stern, authoritative voice of one man—a voice to be feared and obeyed.

Soon word went round that it was the new Prophet from Galilee, and that he was insisting on the purging of God's Holy Temple from all business, all buying and selling, all money-making, everything that could interfere with its true purpose as a place of prayer for those who, though not Jews, wished to find the Jewish God.

When they heard what was afoot, the pilgrim crowds were intensely delighted. Here was a Prophet who believed in practical piety indeed. He would not stand for the systematic defrauding of poor pilgrims in the name of religion. Awed by the Prophet's authority, and realizing that public opinion was on his side, the shopkeepers and money-changers swiftly made themselves scarce; and soon the courtyard was filled with the Hosannas of the children, who were cheering the triumph of their friend (for though the Prophet had been but a few days in the Holy City, he had already made himself beloved by the children).

When all traces of the bazaar had disappeared, Jesus turned to a little group of Gentile inquirers standing near him, and said to them, "Now you can use this courtyard for the purpose for which it was intended, for prayer and the search after God."

Subsequently, of course, there was a pompous and ill-tempered deputation of the Chief Priests and other leaders of "religion". They came to expostulate with the Prophet for his unwarranted violation of their vested interests. But they soon perceived that public opinion was, for the time being at least, against them. They heard ugly references from the crowd to the manner in which poor pilgrims were defrauded in the interests of fat ecclesiastics; and they found it convenient to withdraw in as good order as they might.

But that same night a priestly conclave met and resolved that the Prophet must somehow be put out of the way. It was quite intolerable that the established system of religion should be interfered with in this precipitous and high-handed fashion.

## NICODEMUS

"I REMEMBER the night well, though it was a score of years ago. I was younger then, and like all other Pharisees I was consumed with longing for the coming of the Messiah.

"Of course we knew that the popular ideas of a sudden insurrection against Rome, and the popular readiness to welcome almost any leader as the Messiah, so long as he appeared to be capable of leading such an insurrection, were not merely fantastic, but actively dangerous. At the same time all of us who regarded ourselves as the *intelligentsia*, and even those who, like myself, held positions of authority in the national councils, believed implicitly that the Messiah was coming, and coming very soon, to deliver his people. We knew, however, that he would be a heavenly Potentate, whose coming would be announced by marvellous interferences with ordinary natural law—by miracles in earth and heaven, by unmistakable and all-compelling evidences of God's intervention in some catastrophic manner with the everyday affairs of the world.

"So we waited and watched for a Sign—for something that should give us clear proof that now at last the Divine Man was come. Not till we should see such a Sign would we commit ourselves. Intensely as we loved our country, we were not going to entrust her future (and incidentally our own wealth and position) to the hazards and horrors of yet another abortive Messianic revolt. We had seen too much in the past of such revolts and their results.

"There was a little company of us in Jerusalem—keenly patriotic Pharisees—who had arranged to investigate any person or thing that might conceivably be regarded as the Sign for which we were looking. And it fell to my lot to examine the claims of the new peasant-teacher from Galilee, who had just then appeared in Jerusalem for the first time.

"It happened, I remember, a day or two after the Passover, when the city was still fairly full of the pilgrims. The Prophet (for so the common people considered him—and many were already acclaiming him as the Messiah) had made a great stir a few days previously by driving the hawkers and money-changers out of the Temple—a piece of practical religious reform of which we more progressive Pharisees secretly approved; for the manner in which those rich and miserly Sadducees of the high-priestly party lined their pockets with the profits of the Temple bazaars was really growing scandalous. But of course we did not choose to show any open sympathy with a man whom no one knew much about, and who had already adopted a very cavalier attitude towards the Holy Law.

"So I went to see him by night. I had a long hunt for his lodging; and at last I found him in a most disreputable part of the town—as a matter of fact he was lodging with a family of Samaritans. They were in trouble of some sort, disease I fancy it was—those dirty aliens who do not keep the splendid sanitary regulations of our Law are always falling victims to some disgusting disease or other. At any rate, as of course I was not going into a Samaritan's house, I had to call the Prophet out, and we walked up and

down the dark and malodorous lane in which the house was situated.

"I began with a little judicious flattery, calling him Rabbi (although of course I knew he had no right to the title), and acknowledging that God must have sent him (though in reality I was anything but sure of it) because of the miracles of healing which he had been performing. I was going on to ask him for his credentials, and whether he really considered himself the Messiah, and whether or no he would set up the divine Kingdom of the Jews (rather leading questions, no doubt, but I wanted to get the matter over and done with). Suddenly, however, he took the words out of my mouth by saying that no one, not even a Pharisee like myself, if you please, could see the Kingdom, unless he underwent so complete a change of heart and life as to amount to a new birth.

"As he expounded his views, and told me what kind of Messiah he was to be, suffering and crucified, I confess that, proud Pharisee though I was, I listened spell-bound. It was all so utterly new, and at the same time so wonderful.

"Not that I believed it then."



## THE WOMAN OF SYCHAR

"I WAS a Samaritan; and Jews may not eat and drink with Samaritans. Pious Jews will not even pass through our country. There are no dealings between the two races.

"Yet he spoke to me, and asked water at my hands. He was tired and thirsty enough, but every other Jew would have died rather than ask such a thing.

"I was a woman; and the Jews hold that no man should notice a woman in a public place, not even his own wife.

"Yet he spoke to me, and spoke to me courteously.

"I was a woman; and the Jewish Rabbis say that it is better to burn the precepts of the Law than to teach them to a woman. Yet he taught me the words of eternal life.

"I was a bad woman—that was why I had come out at noon for my water, instead of early in the morning; for I did not wish to hear the taunts of the other women. That was also why I had come all that way for my water, instead of drawing it at the near-by spring. Thank God that I came so far!

"I was a bad woman, and a by-word in our town. No decent Samaritan would say a word to me.

"Yet he, a Jew, a teacher of religion, spoke to me, taught me his faith.

"Not that he did not know about me. How he knew it I cannot tell. But he knew the worst of me, and it was a sorry story. I tried to turn him away from my shame by stirring up the old quarrel between Jews and Samaritans about our temple on Mount

Gerizim. But he refused to be drawn aside into controversy. He was not like a Jew in that—for we have all heard of the famous debate about the Gerizim temple, at the end of which the Samaritan speakers were put to death by the Jews as the losing side!

“He knew the worst about me, yet he spoke to me, he took water from my hands, he taught me, he showed me the way of purity and truth.

“He did not preach at me. He did not even reproach me for my sin. He just showed me the beauty of purity by his friendliness.

“When his disciples came back, they were astonished. They thought he was mad—I could see it well enough—talking to a woman, a Samaritan woman, a Samaritan woman like me.

“But they did not dare to say anything. And I—I ran back to the town, forgetting all about the water I had come for. It was blazing noon, but I ran all the way. I spoke to people from whom I had heard nothing but curses or lewd laughter for years. And I made them come too. They saw that something wonderful had happened. I told them that he was the Messiah; and he was, though not the sort of Messiah *they* expected.

“At any rate they came to see him, and once they had seen him and heard him it was enough. They did not need my testimony then. They believed for themselves.

“And he—what do you think? He came and stayed in our town. He, the Jewish Prophet, came and stayed in a Samaritan town!

“His disciples did not like it at all. Some of them were for leaving him there and then. But they were in awe of him, in great awe of him because they

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had seen his miracles. So they came too. Such a thing had never been heard of before!

"You may imagine what excitement it caused in our town. Many of our people did not like it at first. They said they were not going to take any favours from Jews, who had despised and outcasted them for so long. And when the pious Jews in Jerusalem and Galilee heard about it, you may imagine how much respect they had for the new Prophet!

"But his visit made all the difference in the world to our town, and to my life . . . all the difference in the world.

"I would die for him, and so also would many of my neighbours."

## THE NOBLEMAN'S SON

THE Prophet had returned from Jerusalem to his own country, stopping for a time at Sychar on his way north. When he reached Galilee he began to go from town to town and from village to village, caring for all those in distress, healing the sick, and everywhere preaching the Good News—the Good News that God was the Father of men, and that His Kingdom was coming amongst those who turned from their sin and strove to follow His will.

But when they heard of the Kingdom, the great mass of the people thought that the Prophet meant the Kingdom of the Jews, for which through so many generations they had been looking and yearning. They thought that he meant the coming of the Messiah who should drive out the foreign oppressors, and set up a world-wide dominion of the Jewish race, and a world-wide enforcement of the Holy Jewish Law. Accordingly, as the Prophet's fame grew, the people became more and more keenly and passionately interested in the question whether or no he was himself the coming political Messiah.

One day, when Jesus was preaching and teaching in Cana, near to his own home town of Nazareth, there was a stir of excitement in the crowd surrounding him. His work was interrupted. Through the crowd came a man on horseback. He was dressed in rich robes, and his horse was gaily caparisoned. Behind him rode a mounted escort, in splendid uniforms. Great man though he was, when he came near the Prophet he flung himself from his horse and fell

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at the Prophet's feet, clasping them, and crying piteously, "Lord, come and heal my child, or he will die!"

For a moment the crowd looked on in amazement at the extraordinary spectacle—one of the great officers of Herod Antipas, ruler of the province under Rome, prostrate upon the ground at the feet of a peasant, giving him high-sounding titles, and beseeching him with tears for a boon! The faces of the royal escort especially were a sight to behold for their amazement, disgust, and scorn!

Then the wrath of the crowd broke forth into dangerous murmurs of indignation. Here was one of the odious creatures of Herod within their power. Herod was more than half a pagan. His life was scandalously immoral. He cared nothing for the national religion. Worse than that, he cared nothing for the nation itself. He was content to toady to Rome, to prop his throne by Roman support, to use the power of his Roman masters in order to maintain himself in comfort and luxury by cruel extortions from the common people. Were not most of the tax-gatherers whom they hated so much primarily Herod's men, and only indirectly maintained and supported by Rome? Had not Herod thrown into prison the great prophet John? Was he not always irreconcilably opposed to all movements of national resurrection? Did he not take especial pains to remove anyone who appeared likely to become a national leader? Would he not some day quite certainly make away with this new Prophet also? In short, was not this officer here a brand for the burning, as being a representative of Herod Antipas?

Passions were volcanic amongst this Galilean peasantry. Already stones were being caught up, and the escort were drawing their swords and preparing for action (though indeed it was evident that they had no relish for the task—four of them against that great and murderous crowd, and in defence of a leader who had thus demeaned himself).

But Jesus raised the man to his feet—he was now trembling and afraid, though he continued to entreat the Prophet to save his child—and with a few quiet words his prayer was granted.

The mob looked on in consternation. Here was their new idol, the Prophet who was to save them from Rome and the client slave-drivers of Rome, using his God-given power for the relief and blessing of a creature of Herod's! If he did things like this, how could he be the Messiah, how could he be a Prophet of the Jewish God?

## N A Z A R E T H

THE synagogue was seething with excitement. Although the old men in front hid their eagerness under a pretence of patronizing condescension (some of them were critical, or even openly hostile), the young men and the boys could scarcely contain their fierce excitement during the solemn preliminaries of the service.

Jesus had come back. They had heard vague rumours of marvellous deeds and sayings in the cities down by the lake. But he had come back to the old home to make his open declaration of Messiah-hood. Every one of these young fellows would have followed Jesus anywhere; for had he not been a hero to them ever since they could remember? Every one of them had listened since childhood to the low-voiced talk about the coming Deliverer. Every one of them knew that their fathers had prayed since they were small that they might be the man. And now the Deliverer had come; and he was a man of Nazareth after all, and he was to make his first proclamation to them to-day!

No wonder they were fiercely eager, these young men of Nazareth. They needed but the magic touch of leadership to transform them into wild insurrectionaries, pledged—as so many other Zealots had been in the past and so many more were to be in the future—to death or conquest in the sacred cause of God and their country. And they knew well enough that Jesus could give them the needful leadership. Soon, soon the land would be free from the pollution of Rome.

Jesus stood up before them to read. What would he

read? The sort of reading they liked was the One Hundred and Ninth Psalm.

“And when by thee he shall be judged” (“he” originally meant Antiochus Epiphanes, but it would do just as well for the Roman Governor) :—

And when by thee he shall be judged,  
     let him condemnèd be;  
 And let his pray'r be turn'd to sin,  
     when he shall call on thee.  
 Few be his days, and in his room  
     his charge another take,  
 His children let be fatherless,  
     his wife a widow make.  
 His children let be vagabonds,  
     and beg continually;  
 And from their places desolate  
     seek bread for their supply.  
 Let covetous extortioners  
     catch all he hath away;  
 Of all for which he labour'd hath  
     let strangers make a prey.  
 Let there be none to pity him,  
     let there be none at all  
 That on his children fatherless  
     will let his mercy fall.

That was the kind of reading they liked; or words like these, from the book of Enoch :

And the Kings and the mighty and exalted and those who rule the  
 earth  
 Shall fall before Him on their faces,  
 And worship and set their hope upon that Son of Man,  
 And petition Him and supplicate for mercy at His hands.  
 Nevertheless that Lord of Spirits will so press them  
 That they shall hastily go forth from His presence,  
 And their faces shall be filled with shame,  
 And the darkness shall grow deeper on their faces,



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And He will deliver them to the angels for punishment,  
To execute vengeance on them because they have oppressed His  
children and His elect;  
The elect shall rejoice over them,  
Because the wrath of the Lord of Spirits resteth upon them,  
And His sword is drunk with their blood.

That was the kind of war-cry they were waiting for! That was the kind of message they liked to hear read! And there was plenty of it available in the Prophets. What would Jesus choose?

He chose badly, they thought. "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. . . ." And he actually stopped there! He never even went on to the concluding words about the "day of vengeance of our God". Murmurs of disappointment began to be heard from the back of the synagogue. But they were nothing to the howls of execration which rose a few moments later, when the destined leader of the forlorn hope of Israel against the alien and the pagan began to point out that in the past the alien and the pagan had alone been acceptable in the sight of God!

Jesus had pronounced for internationalism, for racial reconciliation, for the world instead of the nation! He was a traitor to the cause of their country!

No wonder that the young Zealots—the very men who a few minutes before had been eager to follow him anywhere, against any odds—hustled him with violence to the brink of the precipice.

## THE LEPER

"FOR years I had been shut off from human society, except, indeed, the society of a few other unfortunates like myself. We were forbidden to enter any inhabited place. We had always to go about in ragged garments. We were made to cry 'Unclean! Unclean!' wherever we went. Everyone thought us accursed. If anyone touched us, or even came under the shade of a tree beneath which we were resting, he also was unclean. If we broke any of the rules which governed us, we were punished with forty cruel stripes.

"Our existence was a living death, only prolonged by the scanty gifts of food and alms left for us outside the villages by those desirous of gaining religious merit.

"One day, as I waited for alms near the gate of the village, a crowd came through the gate. First there were little children, and boys and girls, all shouting excitedly, and climbing to points of vantage at the sides of the narrow lane outside the gate, from which they might be able to get a view of whatever was coming. Then appeared a surging and ecstatic mob of villagers, all waving their arms in the air and shouting with delight. Then came a little group of up-country peasants, with the Prophet in the midst of them. I did not know anything about him then; but it appears that he had been staying for some days in the village, and had cured a number of sick and diseased people there. The villagers were firmly convinced that he was the Messiah, though he would not let them say so. Now he was going on to another village, and they were escorting him forth.

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"As they came up, a sudden impulse stirred me. I rose to my feet, and staggered forward; for I was far gone by then in the disease. As I did so, the crowd fell back before me; and one man (he was the head of the synagogue in that village) caught me a swinging blow in the face with his staff, ordering me—with a fierce curse—to keep my proper distance.

"But I did not care. I had seen the Prophet's face, and nothing could have stopped me then. I fell on my knees in the dust at his feet. They made a wide ring about us, retreating with cries of panic to a safe distance, and waiting to see what would happen. I besought him, with tears, to heal me.

"You know how strict the Law is about us lepers. I heard a Pharisee say, 'Now we shall see whether he really cares for the Law in a case when it is clearly for the good of the community that it should be obeyed' (I heard afterwards that he had been teaching that their innumerable burdensome ceremonies were only to be held sacred when they made for human welfare).

"Then everyone fell silent, and watched the Prophet standing there, and me, the leper, at his feet.

"He put out his hand and touched me, and lifted me up. I can see his face still as he did it. And I know I shall see that face again, with the love and the pity and the power in it, though it is years now since he was crucified.

"A gasp of astonishment and horror came from the crowd. They fell away from us, and began drifting back through the gate into the village. There were no more ecstatic cries about the Messiah.

"At last all the people had gone, all except the

Prophet, whom my touch had made unclean, and a little group of his disciples, who hovered, doubting and disproving, at a safe distance.

"He spoke to me, and they were the words of Eternal Life; but it was what he had done for me, what he had given up for me, more than his words, more even than the cleansing which I felt renewing my life—it was this that drew me to him and made me his man for ever.

"Then he sent me off to the priest for a certificate that I was healed, as the Law enjoins. He bade me say nothing about it to anyone. But how was I to keep quiet about a thing like that?

"He himself went away to the desolate places beyond human habitation, where we poor lepers live. For my touch had made him unclean."

## THE PARALYTIC

"I HAD lain on that bed for years, unable to move, tortured not merely by pain and helplessness, but by bitter self-reproach; for my conscience told me that my disease was a fitting punishment for the sins of my youth. Yet this knowledge did not make me humble and repentant before God. It merely filled me with a fierce and stubborn resentment against the universe, a resentment which made my life a hell both to myself and to those around me.

"Then one day I heard that the Prophet had come to Capernaum. We had all heard of the wonderful acts of healing which he had been performing in other places; and I was determined that at all costs I would get him to cure me also.

"I ordered my servants to bear me to him (I was rich, and had many servants). They carried me on my bed along the streets. But when we arrived in the part of the town where the Prophet was staying—it was a poor, tumble-down quarter, inhabited by fishermen and other poverty-stricken people, also by outcasts of various kinds—we found the streets blocked by crowds of sick people, who had come to him for healing, and by hundreds of peasants, who had come flocking in from the country around to see the man whom they took for the Messiah.

"I was in a raging bad temper that day. When I found that our progress was thus hopelessly blocked, I ordered the servants, with curses, to put me down there in the street, and to find out some back way towards the house where the Prophet was staying.

Soon they came back, and told me that they had found a narrow lane which would lead us by a roundabout route to the back of the house. I bade them hurry me along it as swiftly as they could. But when we reached the back of the house, we found that we were once more brought to a standstill. It was a poor little house, belonging to some obscure fisherman, and it had only one door, which was on the main street in front. We could get round the sides of the house to the street, but no farther towards the door, for the street was absolutely jammed by the crowd.

"However, I did not intend to be beaten by that. Up the side of the house from the back was a rough ladder, ready for those who might wish to sleep on the roof during the hot weather, or for the man who had to repair the roof (which, of course, was made of mud laid over brushwood) after the rains. I bade my servants haul me up the ladder. They stared in astonishment; but I cursed them, and with not a little pain to myself at last they got me up. Then I told them to dig up the mud and pull up the brushwood of the roof over the main room (it was only a two-roomed house). They thought I was mad, and ventured to suggest that the householder might object! But I was not to be gainsaid, and soon there was a big hole in the roof. We could look down and see the Prophet teaching and healing in the room below. There was a group of Scribes in one corner, I remember—experts in the Holy Law, who made their living by copying it and commenting on it and helping to enforce it. They were not much beloved, I can tell you, by the poorer sort of people, who made up the majority of the Prophet's audience.

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"Well, I ordered my servants to let me down through the hole—no easy task, I can assure you.

"You should have seen the surprise on the people's faces when I arrived down at the Prophet's feet like that—they had all been so absorbed in his teaching that no one had noticed the breaking-up of the roof!

"He looked at me—that was enough for me. I knew at once that he could heal me; and my whole being was filled with the joy of that which was coming, and with love for my Deliverer. He looked at me, and I knew that he could see through the need of my body to the need of my soul, to the sinful past and the need of cleansing and purity. My hard heart was melted in a moment. My resentment against the universe dried up. As I looked at him and loved him, I felt my heart become humble and repentant within me.

"Nearly everyone there knew me, and knew what kind of man I had been. I heard the Scribes whispering together, as the crowd waited in expectant silence to see what would happen. One of them said, 'Well, if he heals that disreputable old debauchee, at any rate we shall know that there is no connection between his miracles and morality or desert.' Another replied with the well-known quotation from one of the old Rabbis, 'There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all of his sins have been forgiven him.' And he said it with a sneer.

"But neither the Prophet nor I paid any attention to them. He knew what I needed most of all; and he gave me the assurance which meant more to me than any healing of my body, the assurance that God would forgive my sins.

"Of course they were suitably shocked. What right

had a peasant from the hills, who knew little of the Law, and showed by his teaching that he cared less, to speak for God in that way? What preposterous and blasphemous claims!

“But neither the Prophet nor I cared for the Scribes. He healed me, and I went forth rejoicing, cured both in body and soul.”



## THE CALL OF MATTHEW

THE bazaars of Capernaum were crowded. From all sides the people had gathered to see the new Prophet—the man who already had given such marvellous signs of his power. That province of Galilee was perpetually in a state of smouldering revolt. Its peasants were Zealots almost to a man. They prayed and yearned for the divine Deliverer, the God-sent Hero, who should complete the work of the Maccabees and drive out Rome. Even its Pharisees, though they were never tired of insisting that deliverance could not come till every Jew kept the Law aright, were as devoted as the peasants to their country's cause. They, too, looked eagerly for a Prophet, who should purge his fellow-countrymen into will to keep the Law, and so should make deliverance possible.

And here, it seemed, the Prophet had come. Who but a prophet, and a great prophet, could perform these miracles of healing? Who but a prophet could cure the devil-posessed, the leper, the paralytic? The common people were enthusiastic for him. If a leader could do this kind of thing, he could raise the standard of revolt. He could carry that standard forward to an easy triumph, destroying the Roman armies before him by his miraculous power, as a man treads down ants.

The Pharisees were not quite so sure. Being better educated, they were more cautious. They would like clearer proof of ultimate success before committing themselves. Besides, several incidents had already occurred which showed that, in spite of his unquestion-

able power of healing the sick, the new prophet (if prophet he was) held somewhat unorthodox views regarding the Law; and no good could come of a leader or a movement which was not thoroughly sound on the Law.

The bazaars of Capernaum were crowded. Everywhere were swarms of excited peasants, amongst whom the Pharisees were going to and fro in little companies, estimating the popular feeling. Their attitude was half scornful, half covertly provocative. Through the crowds there ran a deep, fierce undercurrent of passionate resentment and hatred. Rome, the pagan oppressor, *must go*. Better, a thousand times better, death for God and God's nation than the indefinite continuance of this slavery to the unbeliever.

There was one building in that seething city where fear dwelt. It was the tax-office, or rather shed, for it consisted of little more than a counter with a roof over it, a couple of big boxes, and a stool or two. Matthew, the collector, was a Jew, as were nearly all the tax-gatherers in Palestine. He knew himself to be the best-hated man in Capernaum, because for the sake of filthy gain he had sold himself to the foreign oppressor. He knew also that his fellow-townsmen one and all regarded him—and with reason—not merely as a traitor, but as an extortionate defrauder of the poor. The terms of his contract with the government gave him powers which none but a saint (he told himself) would have omitted to use as a means of feathering his own nest. Still, his conscience had never been quite happy about it; and that unhappiness was to-day very considerably increased by the hostility of the crowds. He knew well enough that if trouble

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broke out amongst those swarming fanatical peasants they would attack his office first. His handful of guards would be swept away in a moment; and his own end would not be a pleasant one. He was most thoroughly and uncomfortably afraid. The people spat as they passed his open counter. They cast dark looks at him—looks whose meaning he well understood. There was a low ominous muttering in the air, which he had known once or twice before, to his sorrow.

Suddenly the muttering rose to a roar. Matthew's heart leapt into his mouth. But it was not yet the roar of murder and loot. It was merely a roar of welcome; for the Prophet was coming down the street towards the tax-office. What would happen next? At any moment the people's thirst for the traitor's blood might be the end of him. A single word from the Prophet would destroy him in a moment.

The crowd in front of his office became denser. It also became more threatening. Insults and menaces were flung back at him over the people's shoulders, as they strained eagerly to catch a glimpse of the approaching figure of the Prophet. He was quite near now. At any rate, one way or the other, thought Matthew, it would soon be over.

Suddenly a great silence fell on the crowd. A silence of fierce anticipation. The Prophet had stopped. He had stopped in front of the tax-office. The fierce joy of committal flamed up in the hearts of the Zealot peasantry packed close around. Surely now was the moment! Now the Prophet would give his word for insurrection. He would condemn that filthy traitor, the collector, Matthew, to the fate which he had deserved

so well. They would stone him to death, seize his monies, burn his records.

And then for a brief campaign of vengeance. Angelic hosts would fight on their side. The Romans would be swept to Hell, and the Kingdom of the Jews would come.

The Prophet walked up to the counter. Matthew rose to his feet, deadly pale, his eyes glancing right and left for a way of escape. The crowd was still silent, eager to listen to the words of condemnation which should fire the train of insurrection.

But instead of decreeing the traitor's death, Christ held out his hand in friendship to the wretch; and the words which fell on the ears of the listening crowd were these two only: "Follow me."

## MATTHEW'S FEAST

THE look on Matthew's face had slowly altered from that of a hunted beast seeking in vain for a way of escape, first to that of a condemned criminal miraculously reprieved, and then to that of a disciple who desires only to do the will of his master.

With a few brief words he handed over his books and cash to his clerk, who meanwhile had been doing his best to hide himself beneath the counter. Then he came out of the tax-office, and with the joy of a new manhood on his face went up the street with Jesus.

Meanwhile the crowd had been slowly dispersing, with low mutterings of discontent. They had been keyed up for a declaration of war. They had hoped for an act of summary justice against the tax-gatherers, which should have given all of them some ready cash from the confiscated taxes. There were many words of reproach muttered against the Prophet, though none as yet dared to utter them openly to his face. What business had he to show friendship in this brazen fashion with a traitor and an extortioner? Why could he not declare himself openly for insurrection? Why did he let such admirable opportunities go by? Undoubtedly he possessed divine powers. Why, then, could he not use them in the cause of God's persecuted people?

As they went up the street, Jesus and Matthew passed a group of Pharisees. These stepped deliberately and carefully aside, lest even their robes should be contaminated by the evil-doer, and by him who was

associating with the evil-doer. Their cynical laughter pursued Jesus and his companion.

That evening Matthew's house was gaily decorated. It was a good house, and it made a brave show with its many lamps and its crowds of servants hurrying hither and thither. There was a great company present, at the invitation of the rich collector. They had met to celebrate his retirement from his official duties, and to welcome the Prophet, whose follower he was about to become. But it was a company of very questionable respectability. There were other tax-collectors, and a few well-to-do foreigners, and also a number of social outcasts, together with some Jews whose morals were known to be so shaky as to make it impossible for them even to pretend to keep the Law. There was good wine in plenty, and the company did full justice to it.

The Prophet was there, as the guest of honour, at Matthew's side. Everyone was struck with his friendliness and courtesy, and with his simple and unaffected bearing amidst so much show and glitter.

During a pause in the gay conversation of the dinner the guests heard a sound of harsh laughter from the outer doorway of the courtyard in which they were feasting. All looked in that direction. Outside the doorway, and taking obvious pains not to touch the doorposts even with the hem of their garments, stood the same little group of Pharisees which the Prophet and Matthew had passed in the street earlier in the day. They were pointing derisively at the Prophet, whose place at table was just opposite the door. Their leader called out, in a high-pitched voice, "A fine Prophet, you! Why are you feasting and drinking

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with traitors and extortioners? A man is judged by the company he keeps!"

For a moment there was a dead silence. Then a clamour of rage at the insult arose from the guests. But it was, as everyone knew, a futile protest, for public opinion was overwhelmingly on the side of the Pharisees, and it would have been very dangerous for the friends of Matthew to have given any practical expression to their resentment.

A few moments later the clamour was suddenly stilled, for the Prophet was replying to those who had insulted himself and his host. Surely he would scathingly condemn the insolence of those benighted pedants, who were also such dangerous mob-leaders!

But his words were these: "Those who are well do not need a doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to summon good people, but sinners."

The Pharisees received his words with sneering scorn. The guests also were not particularly pleased by the Prophet's description of them!

## FASTING

It had been a heavy day of exhausting labour. The sick had pressed around the Prophet all day long, clamouring for healing. There had been constant deputations of Pharisees and expounders of the Holy Law, who had come from all parts of Galilee and even from Judaea in order to ascertain the new teacher's orthodoxy on this point or on that. For the most part they had gone away again with dissatisfied faces. Then there had been crowds of peasants, who had come on pilgrimage from as far away as fifty miles in order to see and to hear the Messiah—for they still persisted in believing him to be the kind of Messiah whom they anticipated and desired.

The Prophet was exhausted. Even more tiring to him than the constant questioning and arguing of the students of the Law were the unbalanced enthusiasm of the peasants and the rapturous delight of those whom he had healed. So many had been healed that day that their shouts of joy and praise filled the village.

Now it was evening, and the Prophet had gone within to the house of a poor disciple in order to snatch a hurried meal before coming forth to deal with the many who had not yet been interviewed or healed.

Just then two more deputations arrived. One was from the Pharisees of Capernaum and the other from the followers of John the Baptist. As it happened, both of them had come on the same errand, to inquire concerning Jesus' attitude towards the ceremonial fasts enjoined by the Jewish religion.



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These fasts were severe, involving complete abstinence from food and drink for two whole days—Monday and Thursday, every week.

It chanced that this day was a Monday; and when, on inquiring for Jesus, the members of the two deputations were informed that he was within, taking his evening meal, they were highly incensed and disgusted. "Did not the Prophet (a fine Prophet he!) know even this much about religion—that everyone who made any claim to be regarded as religious kept to-day as a fast-day, and ate nothing, however tired and hungry he might be? How could Jesus ever have any influence for good upon the common people if in this way he neglected the very first principles of religion?"

The Pharisees said these things with a sneer. They adopted a triumphant attitude of "I told you so: he is an impostor". The disciples of John spoke with an air of mystification, and with acute disappointment.

Just then Jesus came out. He listened tolerantly to the scornful reproaches of the Pharisees and to the disillusioned questionings of the disciples of John. Then he bade them look at the joy in the faces of the crowd around. He told them to listen to the shouts of jubilation which had risen afresh on all sides as soon as he appeared from the house. They said they supposed some wedding-feast was in progress.

"No," said Jesus, "it is for me and with me that they are rejoicing. They are glad because of the goodness of God, with a gladness greater than that of any wedding-feast. How shall they and I fast and be mournful when the Bridegroom is here?"

But the deputations went away angered at the irreligiousness of Jesus, and offended by his outrageous claims. Who was he to call himself the Bridegroom in God's festival of joy, in this insane and blasphemous fashion?

## THE POOL OF BETHESDA

"I HAD been sick with that loathsome disease for thirty-eight years. I was old now, and had no hope of recovery. But still I lay at the side of the spring, hoping against hope that some day I should be able to struggle down before the others into the red-coloured water, when it came bubbling violently up. It was a life of almost inconceivable helplessness and futility; and my torture was continually increased by the knowledge that I had brought this punishment upon myself, through my own sinful follies.

"I was lying there as usual one day, in the portico, waiting for the spring to rise and begin its bubbling. By this time I was a laughing-stock, and idle fools used to come on purpose to mock at my desperate efforts to get down first. I was too far gone to have the remotest chance of success against the many people who came with only minor ailments, and who were perfectly well able to move down quickly.

"How I hated those mockers! How I cursed them! When the Prophet came, I began by thinking that he too had come to laugh at me—God forgive me. Then he asked me if I would like to be healed. I thought at first it was a bad joke, and I answered him pretty roughly, I fear, though not with the curses with which I should have responded to such a question asked by any other; for there was something in his voice which had awed me already.

"Then I glanced up at him, and in his face I saw a look which told me at once not only that he *could* heal me (though it certainly told me that),

but that he *had* healed me. It all happened in a flash. At one moment I was still sunk in the old evil wretchedness, and in bitter hatred for God and man. The next I was a new creature, with the strength which I had not known for all those years flowing through me and renewing my very life, and with a new joy and purpose and loyalty born in me from the Prophet's love and power.

"Take up your bedding and walk", said he—I suppose to prove to me that I was whole again. Up I leapt—I who had not stood erect for a third of a century. I stretched myself. I stooped and folded my carpet and mattress, with the two worn old blankets and the pillow inside. I heaved them up on my shoulder, and off I marched, giving thanks to God, and even leaping in my joy at my new-found powers.

"Meanwhile, all the people there were staring spell-bound. In a moment, it seemed, a big crowd collected and followed me, with cries of astonishment and praise to God who had given such power to the Prophet.

"But I had not noticed that close to the Prophet when he healed me there was standing a little group of Pharisees. Afterwards I found out that arrangements had been made to keep continual watch over all that he did, in order to obtain evidence of Law-breaking against him, and these were the spies.

"At any rate, before I had gone far, a hand was laid on my shoulder, and I was roughly told to stand still. Did I not know that it was the Sabbath (I had completely forgotten—as you may well imagine—all about the Sabbath)? Why was I carrying my bedding through the streets? Did I not know the rule, 'If any

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man on the Sabbath bring in or take out anything from a public to a private place, if thoughtlessly he hath done this, he shall sacrifice for his sin; but if wilfully, he shall be cut off and shall be stoned.' Nor was this just an empty threat; for, as we all knew well enough, Sabbath-breaking was held a capital offence. And I had been caught red-handed!

"You may imagine how it damped the joy of my new-found health. You may imagine how gladness and praise gave way in my heart to fear.

"As it turned out, they did not dare to do anything to me, for fear of the people, who were in no mood just then to brook pious frightfulness. And when I went to the Temple to give thanks to God for my healing, the Prophet found me, and comforted me. But they had managed to destroy my new happiness; and they had found one more reason for trying to make away with the Prophet."

## THE CORNFIELDS

It was near to harvest, and on either side of the track stretched away the yellow cornfields, a goodly and generous sight. The track itself wound in and out through the standing corn. Often it divided into half a dozen little footpaths, over which the heavy ears of the corn bowed till they almost met.

Through the fields came, in opposite directions, two little companies of men. In one company were four or five Pharisees, on their way to the synagogue in the near-by village, for it was the Sabbath day. They were substantial men, well dressed, and decked out with all the ceremonial appurtenances affected in his garb by the pious Jew.

In the other company were half a dozen poor travellers, dusty and tired-looking. With them was the Prophet. They were returning from a night of toil in a distant village, where cholera had broken out. They were desperately tired, and desperately hungry, especially the Prophet himself, upon whom had lain by far the greatest portion of the night's work.

As they passed through the waving corn, these weary travellers plucked an ear here and there, stripped off the husks, rubbed the grain in their hands, and eagerly ate it—so sharp was their hunger.

When the two groups came together, the Pharisees stopped in the middle of the track, with hands uplifted in horror. They began to pour out a torrent of abuse on the travellers. Were they more ignorant than beasts? Did they not know that it was the Sabbath? Were they not aware that all agricultural labour on

the Sabbath day was specifically forbidden by the Holy Law? Here they were, plucking and husking and rubbing corn in their hands! Was not that reaping and winnowing and grinding, and therefore agricultural labour? Did they not know they were going straight to Hell in doing such sin? And were they not setting a most pernicious example of wrongdoing, which would destroy others as well as themselves?

At that moment a poor widow came up, and catching sight of the chief spokesman of the Pharisees, fell on her knees at his feet, and besought him with tears to give her back the property which her dead husband had left to her, and of which he had been the trustee. He spurned her from him, saying that it was absurd for her to blame him for its accidental loss. Then turning to Jesus, he upbraided him fiercely for setting up to be a religious leader and misleading ignorant people (with a scornful glance at the disciples) in this scandalous fashion.

The Prophet replied: "The Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath; and as the true Leader of men I can do what I like with the Sabbath."

As they heard these words amazement and contempt filled the minds of the Pharisees. They spat upon the ground, and with muttered curses went on their way, scheming how they might bring such a blasphemous and insolent impostor to book.

## THE WITHERED HAND

THE synagogue was packed to the doors. The presiding elder had never seen it so filled; but he was anything but pleased at the sudden popularity of his service, for there were any number of people present whose life and conduct (for instance, their habit of drawing water and lighting fires on the Sabbath day) made all assumed interest in religion on their part a shameless mockery.

The old man sat on the platform, glowering at the crowd with fierce malevolence. He also glowered—and with even fiercer hatred—upon the young Prophet, whom the popular enthusiasm had almost forced him to choose to deliver the address after the prayer and the readings were over. Personally he was filled with deep distrust of this young man, and was very far from regarding him as a Prophet. His feelings were shared by the score of Pharisees present at the service. They sat at the head of the congregation, keeping themselves scrupulously aloof (though with some difficulty on account of the crowd) from the questionable characters who had been attracted to-day in such numbers by the Prophet's reputation. By the way, thought the presiding elder, the type of people who were interested in Jesus showed pretty clearly what sort of a prophet he was!

The Prophet was speaking. He sat in the ceremonial seat on the platform. There was not a sound from that huge congregation (except occasional sniffs of disdain from the Pharisees). But what stuff he was giving to them! How criminal to misrepresent religion in this



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way! Love, kindness, the forgiveness of God—and to a congregation not one in ten of whom made any serious attempt to keep the Law! The presiding elder could scarcely contain his wrath.

All at once there was a disturbance—a cry from the back (where Heaven only knew what riff-raff had come pressing in), “They say you can heal the sick. Heal my paralysed arm.” The Prophet ceased speaking. Everybody was silent, except indeed the Pharisees, who were whispering together in great excitement. Would he have the insolence to heal, to do the work of a doctor, on the Sabbath day? Surely he could not have sunk so low as that! But if he did deliberately insult their religion in any such way, then . . .

Suddenly there was another disturbance. A servant came rushing in, and up to the platform, where he began whispering in an agitated fashion to the presiding elder. The old man’s favourite cow had stuck in a bog, down by the lake, and they could not get her out. Hastily beckoning to one of the Pharisees to take his place, the elder went shuffling off down the aisle as fast as he could move, to superintend the operations of rescue.

Jesus waited quietly till the retreating figure had disappeared through the door. Then he called the man with the paralysed arm out into the front of the congregation; and after one or two questions about his trust in God’s power and love, and a brief prayer that the Father’s name might be glorified, he healed him.

The mass of the congregation were filled with wonder and joy, and gave thanks to God. But the faces of the Pharisees were black with anger. As they

gathered round the presiding elder, at the conclusion of the service, to congratulate him on his successful rescue of the cow, their hearts were filled with a fierce madness of hatred at the Prophet's insolent defiance of their teaching and authority: at his blasphemous contempt for the Law.

There and then they began to plot the destruction of the Prophet.

## THE WIDOW'S SON

"My father had been a farmer of our village of Nain, but he had been dead some years, and my mother and I had a hard time of it to keep body and soul together. Our land was our own; but, little though it was, we found it more than we could do to work it, for I was still a boy when my father died. Then there was always the crushing burden of taxation to be borne, and the Temple dues to be paid; and every petty official that came along had to be given his present; and at the best of times our land was stony and unproductive, while sometimes in a bad season it gave us back scarcely anything for the good seed we put into it.

"Then came the sickness. I can remember it well. One or two of our neighbours had been stricken with sudden fever and sore pain in breathing. I had been working all day in a distant field, and my mother with me, though she was not a strong woman. Suddenly, towards evening, a fierce burning heat came over me like a flood, my strength seemed to fall from me in a moment, a heavy hand was laid on my chest, the world reeled about me. I hardly know how my mother got me home. I can vaguely recall our little hut, with my mother anxiously bending over me, and myself writhing in burning fever, and fighting for air, though every breath I took was fierce agony.

"Then all is darkness, complete and utter.

"Suddenly, after what seemed unnumbered ages, I heard a voice bidding me arise. The power and love in that voice will ring in my ears for ever, I

opened my eyes and looked up. I saw a face above me. I can never hope to describe the love and power in that face. But I know that some day I shall awake again, and then also the first thing that my eyes behold will be that Face.

"Jesus the Prophet was bending over me; and as I looked up into his eyes the darkness and weakness fell away from me. I felt new life tingling through me. I was filled with a great joy.

"A moment later, with a wild cry of mingled fear, astonishment, and delight, my mother had flung herself upon me. She was tearing the grave-clothes from my body, covering me with kisses as she did so.

"I looked round. I was lying on a wooden framework—a bier—which had been hastily set down on the rocky pathway outside the gate of our village. Within the gate itself was a scared but intensely excited group of our neighbours, all dressed in their mourning garments. They were afraid for a time to come near me, partly because they were still not quite sure that I was not a corpse (it is pollution to touch a corpse), and partly because they were afraid lest I should be a ghost. A little farther down the path from where I was lying was another group, the wailing women in their black garments, huddled closely together, and gazing up at us with indescribable awe on their faces.

"But I took little interest in these details at the time. I let my mother continue her unbinding of the grave-clothes, and her ecstatic embraces. My whole mind and soul was concentrated upon the Prophet who stood by my side. You can never know what it was like—to have been brought back from the shadowy world of death, and by him. As I gazed and gazed at

his face, it seemed strangely and recently familiar. It seemed somehow to fit in with the fast-vanishing dreams of that world from which I had just returned. It seemed to sum up in itself, marred though it was, furrowed, and sun-tanned, all the meaning there was in the world, all the meaning in life and in death—in death from which I had just been won back, in life to which I had just been restored.

“That was the greatest moment in my life. I gazed and gazed at the Prophet, drinking in the love and the power which lived in his face. And I knew at that moment, I knew—I cannot tell you what I knew, except that he was to be everything to me in all my future, up to my death, and beyond death, and for ever.”

## SIMON'S FEAST

THE rich man's house was gaily decorated. The servants were bustling hither and thither. The dinner was ready—and it was a fine one. The guests were already arriving. Their host stood at the outer door, and as each prosperous citizen came up, greeted him courteously and led him inside the house, first to the antechamber, where one servant offered water and another sprinkled sweet perfume, and then to the inner guest-chamber, where a splendid banquet was spread.

As he thus conducted his guests to their places, Simon whispered in their ears that he had been lucky enough to secure something of especial interest to amuse them to-night, for the peasant Prophet of Nazareth had agreed to be there: "A presumptuous upstart, of course, and for all I hear a despiser of the Law and a keeper of disreputable company; indeed, I was not quite sure whether it would do to have him into the house; but I thought he would amuse you, and after all we can keep him in his place."

The guests expressed polite interest and anticipation, but one or two of them emphasized the doubtful character of the Prophet and the need for seeing that he was not encouraged in any way.

Gradually all the guests assembled, except the Prophet; and Simon remained within, talking with them at the dining-table. In a few minutes a servant came and whispered to the rich man that the Prophet had arrived. "Bring him in," said Simon, without getting up, "but don't show him any special attention. Remember he is a vulgar fellow."

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So Jesus was hurried in, no water or perfume being offered to him; and was shown to a place at the bottom of the table. Simon, scarcely glancing up, gave him a careless nod.

Dinner was served. It was a good one. There was a certain amount of decorous merriment.

Suddenly a commotion occurred at the door. A wild figure, with long, dishevelled hair, burst through the group of servants and rushed into the room.

There was a cry of alarm from the guests; for she was a woman of the city, well known to be of loose character, and her very presence would defile them.

Simon started to his feet with a cry of anger. But the woman, who had been gazing wildly around, suddenly caught sight of the Prophet, rushed up to him, fell on her knees at his feet, clasped them, washed them with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and taking a box of perfume from her bosom, poured it over them, so that the whole house was filled with the precious fragrance.

At first the guests looked on astonished. But soon murmurs began to arise. "Why could he not keep his disreputable acquaintances to himself?" "How could he pretend to be a prophet if he kept such company?" "This was what came of entertaining impudent upstarts in a society above their station." "They had not come there to be polluted." . . . Before long the guests were becoming really angry; for there was not one of them but would be compelled to spend hours in toilsome ceremonial before he could consider himself fit for respectable society once more.

Simon was very much annoyed at the interruption of his feast and at the insult to his guests. He was

chagrined also at the public exposure of this impostor, in whom for a time—greatly to his rich friends' amusement—he had really felt a certain amount of interest. He waited till the woman should take herself off to tell the Nazarene publicly what he really thought of Him.

But Jesus anticipated him with a story about two debtors, one of whom owed £50 and the other £5, and who were both forgiven by the man to whom they owed the money. Which of them would be most loving and most grateful? "The one to whom most was forgiven, of course." That was why the woman had shown such love and gratitude, whereas Simon himself had omitted the most ordinary civilities of a host.

What preposterous assumptions! What blasphemous claims! What insolent outspokenness! Never again, in word or deed (Simon assured his guests), would he show the slightest favour to this Galilean upstart.



## JESUS' FAMILY

DURING the thirty years which he had spent in the old home-life at Nazareth, Jesus had worked hard, both in the carpenter's shop and on the field which belonged to the family of Joseph, and which lay on the hill-top above the village. He had in consequence greatly improved the family fortunes.

Joseph had died some years before; and now that his brothers were grown up and able to work on the land and in the shop, they were able to support Mary and their sisters. Thus it was possible for Jesus to leave home for his great work of healing and teaching.

But his family did not like to let him go. They knew well enough what advantage they gained from his industry and skill. Not long after his departure they began to notice the difference, and to wish very much that he would come back again and work for them as before.

Then came the rumours of his wonderful powers and miracles, and of sayings which could only mean that he was laying claim to the Messiah-hood. The members of his family were immensely interested, and Mary more than half believed in his claims; but his brothers were jealous, and professed scorn and scepticism. Their opposition was much increased after his brief visit to their village, which convinced them that, while making fantastic claims regarding a divine mission, their elder brother was deliberately avoiding the risks of true Messiah-hood, which to them, as to all other Galilean Zealots, meant the leadership of an insurrection against Rome.

From time to time reports reached the hill village of immense crowds of sick and diseased people thronging around Jesus in the cities down by the lakeside. But the only effect of these reports upon the minds of his brothers was to convince them that he was mad.

They said bitterly to each other and to their mother: "Why cannot he settle down here like a sensible man and do some honest work" (by which they meant, "Why cannot he help to make us richer?" for Jesus had never cared about earning money for himself). "Let us go and get hold of him, and bring him back home. We will keep a careful eye on him for a time, and before long, no doubt, he will settle down to the old life."

So, taking Mary with them (she did not much care for the errand, but she was very anxious to get Jesus back), they went off down towards the lake, and by making inquiries here and there came to know that Jesus was in a village near to Capernaum.

When they reached the village they found its narrow streets tightly jammed with a motley crowd of all kinds of unfortunate people: the lame, the blind, the deaf, the diseased. They had come from fifty miles around to get a word with the Prophet. The small central space of the village was filled with an absolutely impenetrable crowd, in the midst of which Jesus was busy at his work of mercy.

When they saw these signs of their brother's popularity and power, the young Nazarene peasants were (it is true) somewhat impressed; but what impressed them was the thought of how exceedingly profitable to the family this popularity and power might be if they were only administered in a business-like way,

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for instance, by making a small money charge from all who came to get healing. They were more than ever convinced that they must get Jesus away to Nazareth, and under proper care.

So they asked those nearest them in the crowd—using somewhat authoritative tones—to pass word forward to the Prophet that his mother and brothers were there and wished to see him as soon as possible.

When he received the message, Jesus knew well enough what it meant; for he had lived most of his life with those brothers, and they had made their attitude quite clear during his recent visit to Nazareth.

He looked round on his disciples, who had left all to follow him, and on the poor people, who were eagerly drinking in every word that he said. "You are my true mother and brothers, my true family," he said, "because you are trying to learn and to do God's will."

PART II

SIMON THE ZEALOT



## THE CROWDS

THE Prophet was a distant relative of mine. We came from neighbouring villages. I was younger than he, and had always had a great respect for him. I first heard that he had left home from one of his brothers, who was very bitter about it, saying that it was a shame for him to deprive them of his help and support and of the money which he earned (I fancy this last was the real point of the complaint, though indeed the family was now well enough off—largely owing to the hard work which Jesus had done for them for so many years—and there were plenty of them left to carry on the business).

Next I heard from a Pharisee in our village that he had been denouncing the Holy Law and flouting the authority of the leaders of religion.

So from these two sources I gained no very favourable idea of Jesus' new work.

But then I heard from a number of people who had been down from our village to Capernaum for a fair that everyone thought he was the Messiah, and that he had been performing astonishing miracles.

As soon as I heard this news about the Messiah I pricked up my ears; for though all the young men of our village were keenly enthusiastic for the national cause, I was the keenest and most enthusiastic of them all. I was a Zealot of the Zealots—so much so that they had given me the nickname of Simon *the* Zealot. I was ready for anything: conspiracy, insurrection, assassination, if it offered the faintest chance of getting the Romans out of the country. But I knew,

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as we all knew, that we could do nothing without a leader. Suppose that Jesus should be the leader whom God had promised us! At any rate, it was worth investigating.

That very same day I set off to see things for myself. He was somewhere near the north end of the lake, twenty-five or thirty miles away. It was easy enough to tell whereabouts he was. I had only to follow the stream of sick and diseased and destitute people who were painfully struggling to reach him. Some of them had already travelled a hundred miles.

When I got to the village where he was working, I was amazed at the sight. There must have been thousands of them, people from every corner of the country, speaking all manner of queer dialects. Jesus, looking very tired, was sitting in a fisherman's boat near the shore (the only way in which he could get room enough in front of him to enable the people to hear his voice). He was telling them a story to show what real religion means.

I stood on the outskirts of the crowd, half-way up a little hill (I remember there was a man sowing seed farther up the hill, and Jesus had used him as the subject of his story). I looked round at the crowd. To my disgust (you must remember how keen a nationalist I was) I saw that there were considerable numbers of foreigners and pagans amongst them, people from the districts of Syria farther north, Phoenicia, and so on. These were benighted idolaters, who knew nothing about our Jewish God and our Holy Law. And the wretches were presuming to listen to a Jewish Prophet teaching about religion! I can tell you that I was thoroughly angry and offended! But

it did not stop at listening. When Jesus had finished his story, the boat was brought in to the shore, and immediately there was a furious rush of sick and diseased people to get at him. Hour after hour, half suffocated, exhausted, unable even to eat, he kept on at his task of healing them; and so far as I could see, wherever there was trustful confidence that he could cure, there the cure was effected. Amongst the others many of these pagans went pressing up for healing. Now there were plenty of unclean Jews in that crowd—lepers and epileptics and so forth, whose touch was ceremonial defilement. The fact that he touched these diseased Jews, even though it was to heal them, horrified the Pharisees; but, as I was a poor man, and so unable to be a stickler for the Law, I did not mind that so much. However, when it came to his touching and healing those filthy foreigners and pagans, I could stand it no longer.

I went bursting through the crowd to him, and when I reached him (it was appalling how tired and worn he looked when one saw him close to) I began pouring forth fierce expostulations. But all that he said was, "Simon, follow me."

There and then I became his disciple. One look from him was enough.



## THE DISCIPLES

THE crowds had hung round Jesus far into the night, and it was obvious to anyone with eyes to see with that it was quite impossible for him to continue working like that. The sick folk were merciless in their incessant demands for his services. What did they care whether he were exhausted, or whether he had or had not time to eat? They pressed clamouring around him, from earliest dawn till late at night. He had no time even for prayer, which to him was much more important than food.

Then there were the continuous rancorous objections of the Pharisees, their spyings upon him, their eager accusations of blasphemy or Law-breaking, their perpetual ingenious questionings designed to catch him in his talk.

But more than all, I think, the enthusiasm of the people weighed upon him, when in headlong impetuous zeal, after some notable miracle, they strove to force him to declare himself the political Messiah for whom they yearned.

I was Simon the Zealot, Simon *the* Zealot; but before I had been more than a few hours with him I could see that he would never make the kind of Messiah for whom I and my companions had longed and prayed. He was too courteous, too full of love, ever to be a ruthless military avenger. In a sense I was acutely disappointed; and yet very soon the better part of me began dimly to understand that what Jesus actually *was* might in some ways be even greater than what I wanted him to be. Of course, even we

disciples continually misunderstood him (what else could you expect from men trained as we had been?). We were always trying to persuade him to become the sort of Messiah we thought he should be; but most of us, occasionally at any rate, began to have dim passing conceptions of what *he* meant by Messiah-hood.

They were a motley crew, those fellow-disciples of mine. When I found that one of them had been a tax-gatherer, I very nearly threw up the whole business and went off home. Some of us were fishermen. One was a man from the south, from Kerioth in Judaea. Of course we all distrusted him, and grumbled because Jesus had mixed in a miserable southerner with us good northerners. Some of us were rash and enthusiastic, some timid and doubtful. But Jesus had chosen us, and that was enough for us. We followed him—not without grumbling, and not without constant attempts to make him adopt our way of Messiah-hood instead of his own—but still (for the time being, at any rate) we followed him.

Very early on the day after I had become his disciple (we had passed a comfortless and continually disturbed night) Jesus called us twelve disciples round him—for he had chosen eleven others besides myself—and told us that we must leave the crowds and go away into some remote and quiet place, where we could pray together and learn what God's will was. I fancy that he had been brought to this decision by the more than usually pressing demands of certain companies of Zealots on the previous day that he should commit himself and take up his Messiahship (by which they meant, declare insurrectionary war against Rome). It was impossible, of course, for us to

escape from the crowds that day; for they would at once have followed us. It was a worse day than the last; and personally I was only carried through it by the thought that to-morrow we should be far away and in quiet. We disciples had often to use sheer physical force to keep the people from treading Jesus down, or from thrusting him bodily into the lake. The crowds were absolutely uncontrollable in their eagerness to see him and hear him and be healed by him.

Somehow we lived through that day, and in the middle of the night we got away. By next morning we were far up towards Mount Hermon; and in the evening we reached a glade on the mountain-side, where we decided to stay for a while. We had bought some rough provisions on the way (the southerner was the treasurer of our company; and made the most of his opportunities too!). As it was fine warm weather, we would camp in the open.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

I REMEMBER that day well. We were high up in our glade on Hermon. For three days now we had been resting, and Jesus had been teaching us. Some of us had been grumbling. In spite of the furious rush and hurry of those days down by the lake, I suppose we had secretly enjoyed being people of such importance. At any rate two or three of us (and I fear I was myself one of the most clamorous) had been reproaching the Prophet with his failure to take the splendid opportunity which had been offered him by those deputations of Zealots. Why did he not call a truce for the time being to all this talk about God and religion—all very well in its way, of course, but hardly practical in the present desperate state of our nation's fortunes? Why did he waste so many hours and days on healing the sick—for waste of time it surely was, so long as the Romans and the Roman-supported Herods were there to bleed the country white with their exactions; for most of this mass of disease was plainly due to poverty? As we grew more rested, we grew also more discontented. I myself, for instance, felt convinced that *now* was the time for the national uprising. I had forgotten my misgivings as to whether Jesus would ever make the kind of Messiah we needed. I thought only of his marvellous powers and of that unexampled popularity from which he had fled.

Aye, he had fled. Had he not turned his back on his country's need and left her at the mercy of her conquerors?

We pressed him to return; we grew clamorous in

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our insistence that he should go back and take up the burden of leadership which God had so plainly laid upon him. In the name of the poor, of the oppressed, of those whose Rome-imposed poverty laid them open to disease (we knew by this time how to appeal to him), would he not return and declare himself? One or two of us even pressed him to set up his kingdom in the name of his friendship for ourselves. Could he bear to see us always poverty-stricken wanderers, when he had the power to turn us into his royal princes and ministers, bearing authority over the whole earth?

We had been talking like this for an hour or two, in an eager group around him. He had made scarcely any answer, but sat in the midst of us, with his eyes fixed on the misty lake away to the south. I remember the cool breeze through the trees.

Suddenly he began to speak to us. I can hear his voice still.

"You are fortunate," he said, "in your poverty and hunger, even in the persecution which is to come. The people for whom you should be sorry are those in power, those with wealth, those who have all that heart can wish."

We listened incredulously. He went on to tell us that the truest happiness consists in humility and meekness, in purity of heart, and the desire to do God's will.

He spoke for long, and they were strange words. At the time I could make little or nothing of them. He spoke of truthfulness and love. He spoke of resisting not evil and of bearing oppression uncomplainingly. He spoke of true spiritual religion, of the kind

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

of prayer which is really pleasing to God. He spoke of the folly of worrying about money and food-supplies if one really trusts God, and of how God knows and meets the need of those who trust Him because He is their Father and they are His children. He spoke of the need of faithfulness and steadfastness and so forth.

Almost as soon as he began speaking we saw a little group of people coming up the glade towards us. They had tracked us at last, and they were but the forerunners of a great host. By the time he had finished there must have been many hundreds sitting on the grass all around, and listening spell-bound to the beauty of his words. He spoke, it seemed, with complete authority. He did not keep on appealing to texts and references and ancient authorities, like the Scribes and other religious teachers of our time. He was his own authority.

We disciples were impressed, I will not deny it; but in view of our Zealot cravings for direct and sudden action, you may imagine whether or no we welcomed such sayings as "Resist not evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*cont.*)

As the different groups of people came up, it was astonishing to see how the Prophet had a special word for each one of them, though often it was a word which they found extremely unpalatable.

First of all he had spoken to us disciples, telling us the sort of character we must have, and how we were to be the light of the world.

Amongst the earliest to arrive in the glade were a group of villagers from the southern end of the lake, who had fallen out about a question of the division of a dead man's land. They had agreed to bring the matter to the Prophet for his arbitration (he had numbers of such cases brought before him, and little he liked them). He seemed to know what was in their minds (indeed they had been quarrelling violently on their way up the glade), and he turned the thoughts of us all to the wickedness of anger and quarrelsomeness, bidding us agree with our opponents quickly, and emphasizing the divine duty of peace-making.

Then there appeared a group of Scribes (it was astonishing how eager they always were in their pursuit of Jesus, in order to get matter with which to accuse him). He dealt with them first by praising the Law and by affirming the eternal truth behind it. At this they looked glum enough, for these were not the sort of words which they wanted to hear. However, they brightened up when he proceeded to take various injunctions of the Law, and to show how the truth behind them was a far bigger thing

than the ancient application of that truth in the Law itself. For instance, the Law applied the rule of mercy to this extent—that we must only exact an equivalent vengeance for wrong-doing, and that while we might hate our enemies we must love our neighbours. But Jesus said we must not take any vengeance at all, must not resist evil, and must love even our enemies. When they heard him treating the Law in this authoritative and downright manner, the Scribes were clearly greatly delighted. They pulled out their tablets and took down copious notes of what he said, to use against him later on.

Next there came a group of Pharisees, and Jesus dealt with them very effectively by his teaching about reality, and avoidance of sham in observing religious duties, such as prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and so forth. It was amusing to see how unconcerned they tried to look when he spoke of those who pose for prayer at the street-corners, and go about with long, lean faces on the fast-days, and sound trumpets before themselves when they give alms.

Then there came up a group of tax-gatherers, greatly to the disgust of everyone else there. Some of us would have liked to take the opportunity offered by our finding them alone in this desolate place in order to show them pretty definitely what we thought about them; but they had brought a number of their guards with them, and besides, we were over-awed by the Prophet's authority, for we had found already that he would have nothing to do with the baiting of tax-collectors. He dealt with them by speaking about the evil of money-grubbing and avarice, and the impossibility of serving both God and money. And from



that he went on to teach us about trust in God for the supply of all that we need.

There were some lawyers there too, and he spoke to them about the danger of judging and condemning our fellow-men and the necessity of generosity, and the folly of finding fault with others when we are probably ourselves much worse than they are.

Later a few priests came up, and he had some straight things to say to them about the desecration of what is holy, and about the fact that a man's character is the only means by which to judge whether his claims to religious leadership are well-founded or not. They did not at all like what he said about sheep's clothing and ravening wolves. Something, too, that he said about blind guides seemed to fit them rather closely, as well as the Pharisees.

Finally, he spoke to us Zealots (there were many of us there by then, and as a matter of fact there had been a good deal for us to think about all along). He had some very plain things to say about people who came to him full of rapturous enthusiasm, but with no intention or desire to obey his rule of life or to follow God's will as he was revealing it. And he finished up with a story about a man who built his house on sand, which gave us all fairly serious food for thought, though it made us laugh at the time.

## THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

THE man was well spoken of. He had little or none of the pride and contempt for us Jews which mark the ordinary Roman officer. He had none also of their inordinate avarice. On the contrary, he had spent money freely to build us a synagogue, and he lived on very friendly terms with the religious leaders and other respectable people in Capernaum.

But still he was an agent of the foreign domination. He was an alien. He was a heathen. Might not his very generosity and friendliness be a means of insinuating himself into our good graces, that he might spy on us the better? Might not these virtues be assumed as a convenient blind for some devilish kind of treachery?

Nothing that he might say or do, no plausible interest in our religion, and no recommendations, however hearty, from the big people at Capernaum, could make us up-country Zealots forget that he was an officer of the foreign garrison, or could bring us to regard him as anything other than a snake in the grass, to be scotched whenever the chance came.

Here he was, with his Roman pride in his pocket, beseeching our Master's help. He had a pet slave, who was very ill. Would Jesus please heal him?

We looked sour enough when we heard it, I can assure you, even in spite of the testimonials from the Capernaum city-fathers. We were daily expecting the Prophet to declare the Holy War against the alien oppressor. Here was one of the first men who would go, however friendly and pious he might have been.

Surely Jesus would not show him any favours! If he did, it would be a cruel blow to the national cause at this critical time, considering the position which Jesus had made for himself.

Then the centurion went on to say how he was both under military discipline himself, and also had to administer it in the case of others. He thought of Jesus as a sort of superior officer, a spiritual legate or imperator or some other heathenish title. All that the Prophet would have to do would be to speak the word from there, and the spiritual agencies under his control would cure the slave even from that distance.

I did not think much of the idea myself. It was fantastic. Whoever heard of a doctor curing a patient without seeing him? Besides, the foreigner's confidence in Jesus seemed almost servile. We Zealots like to stand up to our superiors as man to man, and are not averse to disputing an inconvenient order (though, by the way, we do not like the term "order"—something like "advice" or "suggestion" is more in our line). Now I come to think of it, perhaps that is one reason why our revolts generally end in faction-fighting amongst ourselves.

However, Jesus seemed very much impressed by the Roman's faith. And forthwith he said a thing which a number of us felt to be a deliberate insult to our national cause, and which caused in consequence a considerable lessening of the number of his followers. He said that he had not found any Jew with such strong faith as this Gentile. That was bad enough; but there was worse to follow, for he went on to say that when the great revolution came and the Kingdom was set up (at this we pricked up our ears, thinking

that he must be speaking of the approaching insurrection), the Gentiles should be in it, but the Jews should be outside, in grief and impotent despair.

Of course, at this there was a storm of protest from everybody. It seemed a gratuitous affront to our national pride, a heartless dragging down of our highest ideals.

But the officer's slave was healed all the same, and at that very moment.

## THE DEPUTATION FROM JOHN

COUNTLESS deputations came to observe the work of the Prophet, and to propound to him all manner of questions. Some of these deputations were deliberately hostile; others were friendly (sometimes a good deal too friendly, striving to push him into courses of action of which he did not approve); others were frankly puzzled, and came with a genuine desire to get at facts.

One of this last kind I remember well. It arrived on an especially strenuous day, when from the early morning our Master had been thronged with sick folk of all sorts and descriptions, and from all over the country. We had seen the deputation arrive early in the forenoon, but had had no time to greet them, or even to ask them from whom they came. We disciples were rushed off our feet trying to get the crowds into something like an orderly formation, so that they might come before Jesus one by one, instead of pressing upon him in stifling confusion. It was a terrible task. There were many lunatics amongst them from the hill villages on both sides of the lake. Some of these lunatics were quiet enough, but some were ragingly violent, and needed three or four of us to control them. Then there were hosts of blind people, who had to be carefully led before Jesus. He was extremely particular about our treating everyone with courtesy and gentleness. There was one of us, at any rate, who would dearly have liked to make an honest penny out of the Prophet's popularity by demanding a consideration before bringing the sick people before him.

## THE DEPUTATION FROM JOHN

But Jesus seemed to know that the person in question might show this little weakness, and kept an exceedingly careful watch upon him to see that no such thing happened. I would not say, however, that he was always successful in preventing it, for the people were so eager to get healing that they often pressed money upon us as an inducement to obtain for them a speedy interview with the Prophet.

Well, on the day in question work eased off a little soon after noon. Seizing his opportunity, the leader of the deputation came forward and asked me to get him the chance of a few words with Jesus. I knew him slightly, for he too had been a leading Zealot from our part of the world. He had gone off down to the Jordan valley as soon as he had heard about the preaching of John, thinking that he must be the Messiah, and had remained in John's company ever since.

I took him up to Jesus, and we waited while two or three sick people were cured. Then I interrupted the work, and told the Prophet that John had sent these disciples of his to ask him a very important question.

"What is the question?" said Jesus.

"It is just this," replied the disciple of John. "Are you or are you not the Messiah?"

I knew well what prompted that question, for it was a question which I was continually asking myself. John was in prison, laid by the heels by that devil of a Herod Antipas, because he had been plucky enough to tell him that kings were not exempt from the laws of God. But John had heard all about Jesus. He had heard of his extraordinary popularity and his miraculous power. But when was he going

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to declare himself? When was the judgment of the heathen and the oppressor to begin? When was the day of vengeance of our God to be brought in, with all its supernatural terrors?

Like all the rest of us, John was mystified and impatient, so much so that he was almost beginning to doubt whether Jesus was what we had expected.

I listened eagerly to hear what reply Jesus would give; for, as I have said, the minds of us disciples were continually disturbed by the same question and the same doubts.

Jesus answered very simply. He said, "Well, you have watched what has been happening this morning; and if you stay with us this afternoon you will hear us preaching the good news of God's love to all these poor people. Go back and tell your master what I am doing; and say to him that he must decide for himself, from this, whether or no I am the Messiah, and whether or no God's Kingdom is being established."

The deputation went away looking puzzled and unsatisfied.

## THE FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

At times we found it terribly hard to understand our Master.

There would be days when, after a succession of marvellous miracles of healing, we were entirely convinced—as were all the people around us—that he could be none other than the Messiah.

There were times also when our hearts were touched, even deeply touched, by the love and humility and tenderness which shone through his life to everyone who was in trouble—times when we almost understood what he meant by his idea of the Kingdom of love.

But then something would happen which plunged us into gloomy doubt for days together, and which drove away—perhaps permanently—many of those who had been most attracted to him and most enthusiastic in asserting that he could be none other than the Messiah.

For instance, he would suddenly break out into a wild saying to the effect that those dens of heathen wickedness, Tyre and Sidon, were really more pleasing to God than our own Jewish cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida. How could any patriotic Jew listen to that sort of thing, and still believe that the man who said it could be God's Messiah?

Or he would actually declare that the people of Capernaum, of our own Capernaum where he had stayed so long, and which he knew so well, were more hard-hearted and less likely to be approved in God's judgment than those filthy sinners of ancient Sodom,



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who were blotted out wholesale because of their utter and nameless depravity.

I can tell you, it was almost impossible for us to listen to this kind of thing and to remain his disciples!

Then he would cause the very deepest offence by telling the people stories to show how we Jews had rejected our God-given opportunities, and had even murdered God's messengers, thus forfeiting our special rights and privileges as God's chosen people in favour of Gentile nations.

This sort of teaching caused those of us who believed in him the deepest pain. It made his enemies exult over him and over us, because of the wanton fashion in which he seemed to be sacrificing his popularity. It drove away from him in disgust many hundreds of those keen-spirited Zealots to whom their country meant everything, and who had believed for a time that Jesus was going to mean everything to their country.

But worse than this was his attitude to the tax-gatherers. You know how deep was the hatred which we felt for these contemptible traitors. They were Jews. Yet they had sold themselves and their country to the alien and the usurper. They were the agents of foreign despotism, or of the even more odious foreign-supported tyranny of the Herods. They used their basely bought power in order to levy extortionate exactions from us whom they had betrayed. The country groaned beneath their cruelty. They bled us white. We knew that a large proportion of what they ground out of us went into their own pockets, and was never paid over to their masters. Yet what could we do? They had soldiers to back them; and if we refused

to pay, their vengeance was sudden and complete. Of course no decent Jew of any class or sect or party would have anything at all to do with them. In the big cities they formed a little society to themselves, and mixed in with it were the most abandoned of debauchees and social outcasts—those and those only whose loss of self-respect had proceeded so far that they were willing to be identified in the popular mind with these foul and despicable traitors.

Yet Jesus mixed freely with the tax-gatherers and their disreputable companions. He was entertained at their unhallowed festivities. He stayed in their houses. He made friends with them.

No wonder that both the rich Pharisees on the one hand and the poor Zealots on the other were outraged by this behaviour on his part! No wonder that they held his explanation—that the tax-gatherers needed his friendship and spiritual help—to be the thinnest kind of subterfuge!

## “COME UNTO ME”

THE longer I lived in company with the Prophet, as one of the inner circle of his followers and disciples, the more was I impressed by his loneliness. Often when we were travelling from place to place he would walk on ahead of us by himself; and the rest of us felt so awed by his marvellous powers and by the greatness of his thoughts (which we well knew we could not properly understand) that at such times we never liked to disturb him by forcing our company upon him.

Then it frequently would happen that when we awoke in the morning we would find his bedding lying neatly rolled up. He had risen perhaps hours before, and had gone forth on to the mountains or down by the lake-shore to pray.

He would often say to us that during such times of prayer he received messages straight from his Father, God; and that no one understood about God rightly except himself. I know also that he felt that God, and God alone, rightly understood his own nature and will, and the work which he knew himself to have come to perform.

All this meant that he was very lonely in his spirit; and as I look back now, I can see that we disciples with our crude ideas about political Messiah-hood must often have been a sore trial to him, and can have given him little real companionship.

At the same time there were frequent occasions on which he told us that we meant a great deal to him. For instance, more than once after discussions with

Pharisees and fresh experience of their hard-and-fast ideas about ceremonies and the literal following of the Law he would thank God that we were not like that; but that we were at any rate simple-hearted and ready to learn. Over and over again he told us how essential it was to be childlike in spirit, by which I think he meant this simplicity of heart and readiness to learn.

This was perhaps why he was so fond of children. I have never known anyone in all my life who loved children more, or who was more beloved by them. I think that whenever we disciples had been more than usually dull and discouraging, he would take refuge in the company of children, and thus get his spirit renewed and refreshed by their simple gaiety.

But apart from this and from his times of solitary prayer, the greatest of all refreshments to him seemed to be the company of poor and simple people. When we disciples were half driven to death by the crowds, and were feeling utterly exhausted and sick of them, he would be still welcoming them and serving them with his healing and teaching.

I remember that one day he had a very long and painful discussion with a group of Pharisees (this sort of thing interested us, but exhausted and discouraged him very severely). At the end of it, looking terribly tired, he came back to the crowds of poor sick people who were waiting for him. At once his face lit up with joy; fresh vigour seemed to flow into him, and he said to them, holding out his hands in welcome, “Come unto me all you that groan under heavy burdens” (I think he meant both their burdens of poverty and disease, and also the cruel ceremonial

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burdens which the Pharisees laid upon them, and against which he had just been expostulating). "Come unto me, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and humble of heart" (no one could call a Pharisee that), "and you shall find rest unto you souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

It was with real and deep joy that he said this. The people heard him with joy too.

## THE SIGN OF JONAH

THE deputations of Pharisees which were constantly coming to ask difficult questions of the Prophet would often demand from him a sign; for it was one of the main points of their belief that the coming of the Messiah would be heralded by some tremendous earth-shaking manifestation of divine power. These Pharisees were for the most part rich and respectable people, with a pretty substantial vested interest in things as they were—not at all like us poor Zealots; and though no one could accuse them of want of patriotism, they had seen so many false alarms of the Messiah's coming that they were not going to risk their lives and possessions unless they were convinced, beyond all shadow of doubt, that this time it really *was* the Messiah. They wanted an earthquake, or a mountain taken up and cast into the sea, or something else miraculous on a really substantial scale, before they would be willing to commit themselves. In this they were very unlike us Zealots, who having nothing to lose were ready at any moment and on the slightest pretext to lose it.

Well, these deputations of Pharisees were always asking for that kind of a Sign—a really big effective, striking kind of Sign.

Jesus always refused them. He would often quote to them the case of the prophet Jonah, who was sent with a divine message to a great heathen city. And he would remind them that Nineveh had repented and believed at the *words* of Jonah. Or he would call to their minds how the Queen of Sheba had come from

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a far distant country to hear the wisdom of Solomon. He meant, of course, to show them how, in the past, it had often been members of foreign races, whom we Jews have been wont to despise, who had listened to the message of God, and had thus been found really acceptable in His sight.

At the time it was almost more than we could bear to listen to these things; and as for the Pharisees, they went away openly scornful. They derided Jesus because, in spite of his vast popularity and the firm belief of the common people that he was the Messiah, he refused to give them the supernatural Sign which alone would convince them that he was the predestined national Deliverer. They also derided him because (as they said) he was always insisting on the faithlessness of the Jews and the superiority of other peoples. This they (and we Zealots also) regarded as proof of a deplorable lack of loyalty to the national heritage of our race.

On such occasions the Pharisees would return exultingly, saying that the only Sign the Prophet had given was one of complete lack of patriotism. Meanwhile we disciples would be covered with shame and gloom. But Jesus would be absolutely firm in his insistence that his message of God's love, and his service of the sick and destitute, were in themselves the only true Sign of the Messiah. You can imagine how little satisfaction we got from this!

## THE PARABLES OF GROWTH

As I look back to the teaching which Jesus used to give to the people in those earlier days of his work, it seems to me now that there were two main sides to it.

First of all he was continually warning them very definitely and plainly about the dangers of the type of religion which then held the field in our country, and which was indeed the only type of religion which we knew much about. He used to tell the Pharisees, who of course were the leaders of this accepted religion, that they were vipers, hypocrites, guilty of an eternal sin (because they deliberately called good evil), blind leaders of the blind, and so forth. He was indeed fierce and almost merciless in his repeated condemnations of their pride and self-righteousness, and of the manner in which they forced the poorer people to obey innumerable senseless rules. He was especially angry because, if these poorer folk failed to do so (which they almost always did), the Pharisees classed them all together as accursed and beyond the reach of God's love.

It often seemed to us disciples (though indeed we had little use for the Pharisees, except as patriots) that our Master was almost wantonly vindictive against them; and we sometimes used to contrast the manner in which he attacked their sin with the ready forgiveness which he gave to other forms of wrong-doing, for instance, to the glaring faults of the tax-gatherers and their disreputable associates, which most people think infinitely worse than pride and self-righteousness.



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The fact of the matter, as it seems to me now, was this—that Jesus loved and longed to help and save the common people with such a great passion that he hated with a quite exceptional bitterness these sins of the Pharisees which kept the common people from their birthright in God's love.

You must remember also that, however much Jesus hated sin, he always loved the sinner.

Then, in the second place, the Prophet's teaching to the people dealt at this time very largely with the growth of the Kingdom of God from small things to great. This teaching was always given in the form of fascinating stories, often full of humour, about things with which they were all familiar.

For instance, there was the story of the Sower, and the story of the Tares, and the story of the Seed springing up secretly, and the story of the Mustard Seed, and the story of the Leaven; and these were only a few out of many.

When he had finished telling one of these stories, Jesus would turn once more to his work of healing, and the crowd around him would break up into small groups, each arguing as to what the story had meant. In the course of the next half-hour you would hear the story told over and over again, perhaps half a dozen times, by almost everyone who had heard it; and so they would never forget it, and a few days later it would have become a familiar household word to the farthest limits of Galilee and beyond. He refused to use any other method of teaching the crowds except this story method. But we disciples would often come to him afterwards to ask him what his stories really meant. Sometimes (but not often) he would

## THE PARABLES OF GROWTH

tell us. Generally he sent us away again to think it over for ourselves.

I have never heard any teaching or preaching which came anywhere near being as interesting as this story teaching of Jesus.

At this time I think he really did believe that his Kingdom of God would come slowly and quietly, but irresistibly, amongst all the people, in the fashion which he spoke of in these parables. Later, as I will tell you, his teaching seemed to change somewhat; for he saw that the people (including us disciples) utterly refused to take in his conception of what the Kingdom meant. We had no use at all for a quietly coming Kingdom. How could Rome be driven out quietly? How could the world-rule of the Jews be set up quietly? Besides, were not both our ancient Scriptures and the books of our own day full of prophecies about the Great Day of the Lord, when with fearful power and supernatural miracles the Messiah would come and set up his world-wide Kingdom?

## THE TOMB-DWELLER

THE work of the past few weeks had been exhausting in the extreme, both for the Prophet himself and for us his disciples. He was at the very height of his popularity, and there are no words to describe the weariness which came from the effort to cope with, and to serve aright, those unending multitudes of people that thronged around him.

He had perceived that we could stand no more of it, and he had given directions that we should take a brief holiday together. Peter had brought his boat, and we crossed over in it to the other side of the lake.

The moment Jesus got into the boat he lay down, utterly tired out, in the stern, on the leather seat of the steersman. Instantly he was fast asleep.

On the way across one of those fearfully sudden squalls arose, which make our lake so dangerous; and had Jesus not been with us (though indeed it was hard enough to wake him, even in the midst of that hideous turmoil) we should all have perished, for we had lost our heads, and were in a horrible condition of panic.

We reached the opposite shore in the early morning, tied our boat to a stake, and went ashore to look for a shady place in which to pass the day. We had purposely chosen a desolate part of the coast.

Jesus had wandered ahead, as he often did, and was half-way up a low hill, when suddenly we heard a wild shouting. Out of a cave-tomb at the top of the hill a maniac had appeared, and was rushing down the hill with enormous bounds, straight towards

Jesus. He had no clothes. He was scarred and bleeding all over. From his wrists and ankles dangled the broken ends of big chains. In his left hand he held a sharp flint, with which he slashed at himself as he ran. With his right hand he caught up huge stones (he was evidently enormously strong), and hurled them at Jesus. Meanwhile he was shrieking hideously.

When we saw him, without a moment's hesitation the rest of us beat a precipitate retreat to our boat, fell into it pell-mell, and without thinking of what might happen to Jesus, pushed it off, and never rested or looked round till we had a couple of hundred yards of good deep water between ourselves and that frightful maniac.

When we looked back (feeling by this time a little ashamed of ourselves) we saw Jesus standing in just the place which he had reached before the maniac appeared. The man was kneeling at his feet, and even from that distance we could tell that he was a different creature. His madness had utterly left him.

Soon he was clothed and in his right mind, and begging Jesus for permission to join our company as one of his disciples.

But Jesus sent him back to his own people, to tell them what God had done for him. We heard afterwards that his story had a very wide influence.

## THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

OUR holiday was hopelessly spoilt, for the healing of the lunatic had brought huge crowds around us in a few hours, from all that side of the lake. In the evening we started back to our own side.

When we drew near the shore at Capernaum, although it was very early in the morning, the beach was crowded with people waiting for Jesus; and immediately the old exhausting rush and pressure started again.

Amongst the crowds was a Pharisee named Jairus, a man of wealth and position, who was both a magistrate and the chief presiding elder of the synagogue at Capernaum. In the past he had looked very coldly upon Jesus, and had been a leading spirit of the opposition to his work and teaching. He was a typical Pharisee, proud, pious, and scornful of others. And as such he had been one of those scathingly condemned by Jesus in his recent utterances. He had also been one of the chief leaders in the movement, now fast gathering head amongst the Pharisees, for getting rid of Jesus, by fair means or foul.

We were very much surprised to see Jairus on the beach, and naturally supposed that he had come to spy upon Jesus or to propound to him one more of those ingenious problems designed to show up the Prophet's ignorance or heterodoxy, in the making of which he and his fellows were so skilful.

Therefore we were all correspondingly astonished when, as soon as the boat touched the shore, he came thrusting through the crowd and fell on his face

## THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

at Jesus' feet, with eager prayers that the Prophet would hear his request.

This transformation was so extraordinary that everyone listened in silence, and with the greatest curiosity, to hear whatever the need could be which had brought the proud Pharisee to his knees before the peasant, whom he had despised and plotted to destroy. In broken words he told Jesus how he had a little daughter, his only child, who was desperately ill. He was deeply attached to her, and would do anything to save her. Would the Prophet come and heal her, for he alone had the power?

When we saw this change in the Pharisee, and his sudden humility, one or two of us began to exult over him. As a matter of fact, many there had long-standing grudges against him, for he had used his powers for the enforcement of the Holy Law in a manner which had been none of the gentlest or most considerate towards the poor. Someone suggested that before our Master did anything for him he should at least demand a guarantee that in future there should be no more opposition to his work from the Capernaum Pharisees.

But Jesus would have none of all this. I believe that he never gave a moment's thought either to the fact that he had a dangerous enemy at his feet or to the excellent opportunity thus offered him of preventing opposition and conspiracy in the future.

He merely saw the man's need, the man's humility, and the man's faith; and he went off with him immediately, followed by an enormous crowd, to heal his little girl.

## THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD

THE crowd was so dense, and so much excited, that it was all we could do to make our way to Jairus' house that day. As we were going up a narrow street, leading from the beach towards the market-place, an interruption occurred which delayed us considerably, and made Jairus almost crazy with anxiety and impatience.

Jesus suddenly stopped, turned round sharply, and asked, "Who touched me?" It was a curious sort of question to ask, for the crowd was at that very moment pressing closely upon him from every side, so that we had almost to fight to keep from being trodden down. However, Jesus asked the question, and (as quickly appeared) with some reason; for after a moment a woman made her way timidly forward and fell at his feet.

Many of us knew her. She was untouchable, for she had an unclean disease. She had become a byword in the place on account of the grotesque remedies which various quacks (including some Scribes, for the matter, of course, came under the Law) had recommended her to adopt in order to get healing. She had tried Alexandrian gum, Persian onions, sudden frights at a cross-road, burning vine-cuttings, digging ditches, and all manner of similar remedies. She was indeed a laughing-stock throughout Capernaum; and the poor thing felt it deeply, for she was a respectable woman, and of course no one would have anything to do with her so long as she had that disease. Incidentally her medical experiments had used up all the money which her dead husband had left her.

None the less it was unpardonable in her to touch the Prophet, for her touch was unspeakably defiling.

Everyone expected him to be very angry, and to curse her for her presumption. (It was interesting to see that even Jairus, in spite of his maddening haste and anxiety, was careful not to touch Jesus again, since the woman had touched him.)

But Jesus showed no trace of anger. He held out his hand (Jairus and the rest of us shrank back from his touch), and raised the woman to her feet, thus gratuitously incurring fresh pollution.

Then he said to her, in a tone of kindly blessing, "My daughter, your faith has cured you; go in peace, and be free from your illness."

I was watching the face of Jairus. It was a study. Was he to welcome this defiled ignorer of the Holy Law to his own clean house? The struggle was bitter. He knew what to expect from his fellow-Pharisees if he let family affection conquer loyalty to religion. He would probably be boycotted. He would certainly lose his honourable position as magistrate and presiding elder.

However, his love for his daughter won (I have thought better of Jairus and of all Pharisees ever since, enemies of ours though they often are); and he hurried Jesus on towards his home.



## CEREMONIAL UNCLEANNES

I HAVE told you about the deputations of Scribes and Pharisees which used to come to Jesus from time to time in order to test his attitude on various points of their religious and ceremonial belief. One such deputation I very clearly remember, because it was the first which came all the way from Jerusalem to interview him—no light matter, for the Jerusalem Pharisees were in general very contemptuous of Galilee and all things Galilean; and of course men so strictly orthodox could not come by the straight route through Samaria, for fear of incurring defilement from the unbelievers there, but had to make an enormous detour round by the east.

At any rate they arrived, and were received with suitable dignity by the Capernaum Pharisees. The whole town knew about their coming, and the reason for it; and there were huge crowds present the next day to hear what went on between them and Jesus.

The question they propounded was concerned with those ceremonial washings before and during and after meals, about which the Pharisees are so extremely particular. They live in constant slavish dread of ceremonial defilement. They will not acknowledge that a man has any right to be called religious, or any claim to God's love and mercy, unless he keeps their absurd rules. And it is no easy task to keep those rules; for the biggest of the six books of one of their codes is given up to this subject of Washings alone, and thirty whole chapters in that book deal with the right and the wrong ways of washing eating-vessels!

You must not suppose that it was a question of sensible hygienic rules about keeping one's hands and dishes clean. It was a matter of ritual. For instance, some said that one could get the credit of washing simply by placing one's closed fist in the hollow of the other hand and rubbing and rolling it there, without any real washing at all. But most of them were far stricter than that, though in no more sensible a way. Some of them washed not only before and after a meal (many of them twice over before a meal), but between every course also. Then they had all kinds of fantastic ideas regarding the position of one's hand when washing. The fingers must be held straight up, and the water must run down the wrist, and so forth.

The worst of the whole business (apart, incidentally, from the enormous labour involved in drawing and carrying the huge amounts of water a pious Pharisee required for his washings) was that you never knew where you were. In their godly enthusiasm they were always inventing new rules about washing, and then coming down and trying to enforce them amongst us poor people, and calling us accursed children of the Devil if we did not obey them.

I tell you plainly—these rules of theirs about washings made many thousands of us poorer people throw up all interest in religion, and resolve that, if this was what God meant, we would have nothing more to do with Him, but would go to the Devil in our own way.

Well, this deputation asked the Prophet why he did not insist on his disciples following their rules about washings. They got more than they bargained for in return! He carried the war into the enemy's camp

## SIMON THE ZEALOT

at once by asking them why they allowed people to break the Law by refusing help to their old fathers and mothers on the ground that they had vowed to give the money to the Temple!

Then he turned to the crowds and told them plainly that there was no sense or right in these ceremonial washings, because the only thing that really defiles a man is the filthy state of his own heart and the sins to which it gives rise. He even said that all kinds of food are free from ceremonial uncleanness, and that we might eat what we liked!

You may imagine how that horrified the Jerusalem Pharisees! But when we ventured to suggest that he had given them needless offence, he simply said: "Any plant not planted by God will be rooted up. Let them alone, they are blind guides of the blind."

## THE DISCIPLES SENT OUT

As the fame of Jesus grew, it became more and more obvious that it was impossible for any one man to cope with the amount of work which was laid upon him. His whole life was now one constant endeavour to meet the demands of the sick and diseased—so much so that he found it very difficult to get time enough for the teaching which he regarded as equally important with the actual healing.

The fact that he could not do more—though indeed no man ever worked harder than Jesus—greatly distressed the Prophet's mind; for the sight of pain and need which he might have relieved, but had no opportunity of relieving, was to him the acutest of pain. He would often say to us that the crowds of people who thronged him were like shepherdless sheep; they had no leader or guide; they were defenceless against the powers of evil which encompassed them. They were ready to accept the message of God's love; their minds were full of the trustfulness requisite for their healing, but there were so few to help them and teach them that thousands turned away untended and uninstructed.

It was the pain which this fact gave him—for no one ever loved the poor and hungered for their well-being as Jesus did—which impelled him to his great experiment of sending out us disciples, two by two, through all that part of the country, in order that we might be duplicates of himself, as it were. He gave us instructions to tell everywhere the good news of God's Kingdom, and he gave us power to heal diseases.

I vividly remember the parting directions which he gave to us. The Pharisees on the one side, and many of us Zealots on the other, were continually accusing him of lack of patriotism (indeed that is a very mild term for our accusations). We had three main grounds of complaint against him. He still refused to take up the task of the Messiah (as we conceived the Messiah). He consorted with the traitorous tax-gatherers. He seemed constantly to go out of his way to impress upon the minds of his hearers the fact that God would probably reject the Jews but accept the Gentiles.

But, as I look back on that day when he sent us out, I remember that he gave us explicit instructions *not* to go to Gentiles with our healing and our good news. He would not allow us even to go to Samaritans. We were to concentrate all our efforts on our own people; for (as he said) there would not be time to bring our message and our healing to all our own people before the Messiah really came (I see now how tragically different was his conception of the coming of the Messiah from our own: he was already aware that the growing opposition of the authorities would not give him much more time).

When I recall these instructions of his, and other occasions when he mourned bitterly over the failure of the cities of Galilee and (later on) of Jerusalem itself to receive his message, I see how cheap and foundationless was the charge of lack of patriotism which was so often brought against Jesus, and which troubled me so much at the time. Jesus loved his own country passionately; but he was awake to his country's faults, and he knew that force could never right wrong. He

slaved unremittingly for his fellow-countrymen during his lifetime. Finally, he died for them. How, then, can he be said to have been no patriot? I can see this all clearly enough now.

He warned us, before he sent us out, that we should have fierce opposition to face. He told us that we should find ourselves estranged from the members of our own families. We should be cursed as devils, just as the Pharisees had cursed him, and had said that his power over disease came not from God but from Satan (this always seemed to us disciples—and I believe to Jesus himself also—the very acme of Pharisaic folly and wickedness). But he assured us that God would look after us. As he said this, he pointed to the sparrows building their nests in the roof of the rough shed where we were camping then; and he told us that God cared even for them, and how much more for us!

Then for the first time he used those terrible and ominous words (as they seemed to us then, but I think them glorious now), that we must follow him to the gibbet—to the gibbet where (as we say) “slaves feed crows”. The words sent a shiver through us. They were a queer encouragement to our enthusiasm for our new “independent command”. But he finished up his instructions by telling us that everything we did for the poor and needy, even the giving of a cup of cold water, was richly acceptable in the sight of God.

## THE FIVE THOUSAND

As I look back on it now, I see that it was the crisis of everything—in a sense the final crisis. Up to that moment the enthusiasm had been steadily growing. The people were becoming more and more completely convinced that this could be none other than the Messiah. The Scribes and Pharisees might cavil and blaspheme, but they could do little in face of his enormous popularity. He himself, as I now believe, was under the impression that he would be able gradually to train the people in his ideals of the Kingdom. This was why his teaching always emphasized, up till that point, the slow and gradual growth of the Kingdom, secretly transforming the whole life of the nation and of mankind.

But after that unforgettable evening everything was changed. He saw that his old method of work, which had brought such joy to his heart (because he was continually giving his utmost, broadcast, to the poor and needy), was no longer satisfactory or even possible. It was imperilling the very ideals for whose extension he had adopted it. It was a danger rather than a help to the coming of the Kingdom.

Out of pure love and compassion he had given them food. Five thousand of them! For a space they had been stricken dumb with surprise. Then in uncontrollable excitement they had rushed thronging round him, acclaiming the Messiah, cheering ecstatically for the King of Israel, the God-sent Deliverer. And why? Because they had suddenly become converted, by this exhibition of his divine power, to a belief in his ideal

of Messiah-hood : to a sharing of his standards regarding suffering, patient love, and meekness ; regarding peace-making, and redemption through the sacrificial bearing of pain and wrong?

No! In the main I fear they were thus roused to wild enthusiasm for him merely because he had given them food without their working for it! They wanted him for King and Messiah, because he would give them free food! That was what it came to, their reckless ardour, their shouting of Hosanna for the Messiah!

I do not think that anyone ever, in all the history of the world, suffered such a bitter disappointment and disillusionment as Jesus did then, as the twilight came down on the lake and the crowds and the mountains behind.

You must realize that we disciples were against him too. There we were, drunk with excitement, clamouring the loudest of all, "Now, now, now is the time for commitment; for restoring the Kingdom to Israel; for declaring the Insurrection; for driving the Romans into the sea!" We would not be gainsaid. We were vehemently, insolently importunate. He had to use all his authority over us to get us into the boat and away. And I know that I personally only consented to embark and to go ahead because I intended to announce everywhere, as soon as we reached the other shore, that he had committed himself to the Insurrection; for I felt (and I think all the rest felt the same) that by fair means or foul his hand must be forced.

How he dispersed the crowds, after our influence was removed, I do not know. I fancy there were



harsh truths plainly told; for there was bitter grumbling against him when the people who had been there reached the cities. At any rate, he spent hours in prayer on the mountain, after they had all gone; and it must have been at that time that he made up his mind to change his tactics, to abandon his broadcast teaching and healing as soon as might be, and to concentrate upon the training of us twelve.

Yes, it was the crisis—the turning-point of his whole career. Of course he could not at once give up the old life; for a time his popularity was greater than ever, in the sense that ever larger and larger crowds of sick and diseased people thronged around him. But his teaching grew harder and harder for patriotic Jews to accept, and it was not long before he broke with the crowds altogether and took us away to the North for quiet training.

## THE CHANGE

WE had had a terrible time that night crossing the lake. When we started we were full of wild enthusiasm, determined to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah (our sort of Messiah) as soon as we reached the other shore, and thus force his hand and compel him to the leadership of the Insurrection.

But I cannot describe to you what a mellowing and restraining effect six or seven hours of hard rowing against a very choppy sea and a strong contrary wind can exercise upon that kind of enthusiasm. Before we were half-way across we were indescribably tired, and very considerably discomposed; for I challenge the hardiest sailor to go through one of our lake storms in a small boat without changing colour somewhat. All that we longed for now was to reach the shore safely, and crawl to our homes and rest.

Then Jesus caught us up, and taught us once more our complete powerlessness without himself, and our ability to conquer any obstacle so long as we trusted in him. He gave us no words of reproach for the insolent self-assertion and disloyalty (for it amounted to that) which we had shown when the people were trying to make him their King by force. He merely gave us a practical illustration of the fact that it was only through obedience and trust in himself that we could do anything at all. By that time the storm and our sea-sickness had put us all into a thoroughly chastened frame of mind; and we were so intensely relieved to have him with us again that we drank in his teaching on this point with eager hearts. No one

dared or desired to say a word more about the public commitment and declaration when we reached land.

Well, for a time the crowds were as huge and as insistent as ever, but not for long. The tone of the Prophet's teaching seemed to change. He told them frankly that they were seeking him because he had given them free food. They did not like that, but it was true. He uttered strange sayings, which none of us could comprehend at the time, about his own nature. He was the Bread of Life, sent down from heaven, and we must eat him. "He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains within me, and I within him. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father, so he who feeds on me, he also shall live by me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven. He who feeds on this bread shall live for ever."

He began giving this new kind of teaching (which completely mystified us then, though we understand it now) in the synagogue at Capernaum; and you may imagine the consternation which it caused amongst those of us who believed in him, and the unfeigned delight which it gave to his enemies. For a long time they had been saying that the Prophet was insane; that his miracles were the strange fruit of madness; and now they declared that this new teaching of his gave complete and final proof of his insanity.

It was a hard time. Hundreds of those who a few weeks before had been crowding round him, and listening eagerly to every word which he uttered, now left him in unfeigned disgust. Even some of us in the inner circle of discipleship were so discouraged

and disappointed that we thought of going away. Jesus knew what was going on in our minds. One evening, after a day of dwindling interest and gathering opposition, he gave us full liberty to go, and asked us if we would avail ourselves of it.

Then Peter—he was a man of strange moods, sometimes as weak as water and as fickle as the wind, but sometimes fired by a flash of real genius—rose to his feet and looked round on us defiantly, saying, “Well, you may go if you like; but as for me, I stay.” Then, turning to Jesus, he said: “Sir, to whom are we to go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are certain, that you are the Messiah.”

Jesus seemed pleased for a moment by Peter’s loyalty. But then he said sadly: “Even one of you twelve is a traitor.”

## THE CANAANITISH WOMAN

A WEEK or two later Jesus gave up his work in Galilee, and took us with him for a rest and holiday in the Gentile country well away to the North, beyond the boundaries of Palestine.

As you may guess, we were not at all willing to go with him. Several of us—and myself especially—thought it nothing short of a criminal waste of God-given opportunities for him to turn his back on his popularity, to dismiss inquirers with hard paradoxical sayings, to confront the Pharisees ever more plainly with their hideousness in the sight of God, and to ignore so callously the needs of his down-trodden country.

We went with him, but we went under protest, sore-hearted, disillusioned, and, I am afraid, disloyal.

The holiday was a complete failure; and as an opportunity for teaching us disciples, the journey was too brief to be of much effect.

What happened was this: As before, we had slipped away from the crowds very early in the morning, and the first two days had travelled rapidly, and by little-frequented paths, till we had passed the borders of our own land. Then we began to go in a more leisurely fashion, and to look out for a village in which we might stay. Of course the people were all, or nearly all, benighted Canaanitish heathen—members of the very race which had been doomed and dispossessed when our fathers entered Palestine. It was hard for some of us to treat them with even moderate civility, when we thought of their hatefulness in the sight of God and of their filthy idolatry.

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But even these dogs of pagans had heard about the Prophet. Though we were so far away, and among such very different surroundings, they came crowding to see him and be healed by him—so much so that we soon had to give up the idea of a holiday in despair, and abandon all hopes of an opportunity for quietly learning from him, or for convincing him of what his duty was (this, I fear, was what I myself wanted to effect).

I remember well how it all began.

We had arrived at a tiny hill-village. Jesus was very tired, and was sitting resting in the market-place. A few people quickly gathered, and in a moment or two we heard someone whispering that it was the Galilean prophet. I remember I was talking to Andrew (probably in no very gentle tones) about the insolence of these dogs of Canaanites in daring to approach our Master. I expect I was somewhat ostentatiously careful also not to allow any of them to touch my garments.

Suddenly a woman rushed up, fell at the Prophet's feet, and besought him to cure her child, who was epileptic.

At first Jesus did not answer. He was tired out. He knew well enough what would happen if he did one single act of healing there. It would be the end of his holiday and of his opportunity for teaching us disciples. Besides, he felt that his first duty was to the Jews, and that he had far from enough time and strength even for them.

But the woman kept on clamouring importunately, so I asked him, roughly enough no doubt, to drive the dog away—you know what hateful and accursed things dogs are to Jews.

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The evil word stirred Jesus, and the moment I had said it I wished I had held my tongue. But he gave no sign of anger. He turned to the woman and said: "I have not even time and strength for the needs of my own people. Is it fair to take the children's food and throw it to the puppies?" He used my thought, you see, but made it friendly and witty by employing the gentle name for the family pet, instead of the hard term for the pariah of the streets.

The woman caught at the wit in a flash. "Aye, Sir," she said, "but remember that the puppies sit under the table and snap up the bits of food that the children let fall."

Jesus laughed with delight at her wit. He was greatly pleased also by her strong faith. He spoke the word of healing, and our holiday was ruined. Next morning the crowds were as thick around us as they had ever been in Galilee.

## PETER'S CONFESSION

It was of no use for us to stay long in Phoenicia. There was no chance of a holiday there. Everywhere the people thronged about the Prophet with their ailments; and as he felt that his first call was to his own countrymen, we went rapidly forward through the hill-country, reached the sea-coast, turned to the east from Sidon, crossed the Jordan near its source, and came south again through the Gentile regions to the north-east of the lake. We travelled fast and avoided the villages; but even so there were constant delays from the implorings of sick and diseased people, who always seemed to have a kind of uncanny knowledge that the Prophet was in the neighbourhood.

We spent a few days in the towns at the north end of the lake, but Jesus was restless. His mind was becoming more and more fixed upon the necessity for training us twelve disciples, and for training us as rapidly as possible in view of what might happen to himself. Though his compassion and love for those in need were as strong as ever, from this time forward there was a new shrinking from popularity, and a new tone of urgency in the instruction which he gave to us at every possible opportunity.

I shiver when I realize how utterly and hopelessly stupid we were, and how little we responded to that teaching. Our hearts were hardened by our own preconceived notions about Messiah-hood and about the political and insurrectionary character of the Kingdom of God. I do not think that any teacher ever



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in the whole history of the world had a harder task than the task of Jesus in trying to make us hard-bitten Zealot peasants understand what he meant by God and God's way of dealing with mankind.

We soon left Bethsaida, and still in search of leisure and quiet for teaching, hastened due north, past the smaller lake, and up into the great hills, with their forests and rushing streams. We stopped at Caesarea Philippi for a few hours, but it was not a place for devout Jews. It was defiled by heathen shrines—to Pan and so forth; and one could never forget the standing insult of the temple built by that impious old toady, Herod the Great (so-called), to the Emperor Augustus—a temple made by a Jewish king for the worship of a man, a pagan, an oppressor of his own country!

It was on the next day, I think, that we halted high up on a shoulder of Hermon. At last we had shaken off the crowds; and Jesus began in earnest and at leisure the task of teaching us.

The first lesson which he taught us, and clearly he thought it much the most important of all, was the lesson of prayer. He had already given us his brief model of prayer, which we still use; and he had taught us much about the way in which we must come to God trustfully and simply, as little children to an entirely loving Father. But now he did a thing which he had not done before. He let us share with him in his own private prayer. We knew, of course, that he spent hours at a time in prayer, generally out on the mountains, and that he often prayed aloud at such times; but now he let us stay with him as he thus prayed. That was his first lesson; and as I think of

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the mood I was in at the time I beseech God in agony to forgive me.

After this lesson of prayer he began to talk to us about the future—a subject in which we were much more interested. He started by asking us what the crowds were saying about him. We told him, cautiously, that they thought he was a great Prophet; for indeed since the events of the past few weeks there had been scarcely any mention either amongst ourselves or amongst the crowds of his Messiah-hood.

Then he asked us straight out whom *we* thought him to be; and Peter, the most optimistic of us, told him that we thought him to be the Messiah. The rest of us, I fear, maintained a rather gloomy silence.

Jesus was pleased with Peter's avowal, though indeed he knew that Peter's ideas of Messiah-hood were very different from his own. But I think he saw in Peter a certain measure of faith and courage and personal loyalty, qualities which were only too obviously lacking in the rest of us.

He went straight on to expound to us (it was the first time that he had spoken explicitly in this strain) what kind of Messiah he must be. He told us that the opposition of the Pharisees and priests was bound sooner or later to come to a head and destroy him. He would not resist. He would stand by his principles of love and patience to the end.

I can still see the circle of us disciples sitting round him then: the ill-concealed scorn on the faces of most of us (including myself, I fear); the conflict between loyalty and disgust on the face of Peter; the hopeless perplexity of Thomas; the dismayed

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affection of young John. It was all (as I know now) indescribably tragic.

Of course Peter must needs blurt out something soothing, about looking on the bright side of things, and his being very tired just then, and the glorious declaration of emancipation which he would soon make for our country, and so forth. It was sufficiently crude, but Peter was like that.

Jesus would have none of it. He was really angry with Peter for trying to turn him away from his duty. And he went on to tell us in plain terms that if we wanted to be his disciples, *that* was the kind of Messiah we were going to follow. We must prepare ourselves, not for fat sinecures in an earthly Kingdom, but for the gibbet. The reward of our faithfulness or unfaithfulness would lie beyond this world.

## THE EPILEPTIC BOY

AFTER he had been teaching us for a few days in this manner, I fear it became more and more evident to the mind of Jesus that there were some of us (and I know, to my shame, that I was one of the number) who were not only failing to profit by his instruction, but were grievously hindering the progress of the rest. I know that several others, like myself, could hardly listen with patience to what he told us. We were desperately eager to get back again to the crowds, and to have another attempt at a public commitment. I am afraid we had learnt absolutely nothing from the events of the past few weeks.

We entirely refused to believe that our hopes of his Messiah-hood (and therewith of our own appointment to high posts in his Kingdom) were foundationless. All his teaching regarding the spiritual nature of his function and dominion, and especially this new teaching about the necessity of his suffering at Jerusalem, we regarded as an amiable eccentricity, or as an attempt to put us off the scent and to curb our impatience for what we called action.

You may imagine that it was anything but easy for Jesus to give his new teaching about his mission in this atmosphere of amused and, I fear, cynical disbelief in its sincerity.

Finally, he called apart Peter and James and John, the only members of our company who showed any signs of spiritual discernment (though indeed these three shared our ambitions about the earthly Kingdom—the only difference between them and us was that

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they were personally more devoted and loyal to Jesus himself). The four of them went away farther up Hermon. Eventually, I believe, they reached the actual summit.

Meanwhile the rest of us departed, gladly enough, for a village at the foot of the mountain, where we spent our time talking to the simple country people about the greatness of our Master, the imminent coming of his Kingdom, and (especially) the incredible honours and dignities which were to be showered on ourselves when it came.

We also tried our hands at a little amateur healing to while away the time, but not with any very marked success.

What happened to Jesus and the other three up on the top of Hermon I do not know. I have reason to believe that they had some wonderful vision or other spiritual experience, and that Jesus gave them more definite explanations about his method of working and the fate which was bound to befall him sooner or later if he followed that method.

When they returned, a day or two later, they found the rest of us in rather an embarrassing situation. We had been trying to heal an epileptic boy in that village. There was a large crowd of people watching our efforts, which were by no means successful. Indeed, if the truth be told, our failure was making us look excessively foolish.

When Jesus arrived, he healed the boy at once; and afterwards told us (we were in a somewhat chastened mood by then) that it is only through prolonged prayer and spiritual discipline that this power over disease can come to man.

## HUMILITY

SOON afterwards we started south once more, and passed rapidly through Galilee on our way to Jerusalem, where Jesus was intending to be present at the Feast of Tabernacles.

I can still see our line of march in my mind's eye. Ahead would go Jesus, walking rapidly, lost in meditation, often praying aloud. We disciples did not dare to walk very near to him, but kept together in a little knot, perhaps a hundred yards behind. As we went, there was one unfailing topic of conversation amongst us—the chances that during this visit to Jerusalem he would commit himself (or give us the opportunity to commit him), and in that case what kind of posts, and how fat salaries, we would get in his Kingdom.

I fear our intense interest in this latter point led to frequent quarrels; for each of us wanted the Diwanship for himself, and each could offer pretty good reasons (or so they seemed to himself) as to why he should receive it. Peter regarded himself as a born leader of men. John held that he was Jesus' favourite. James pointed out that he was older than John. I myself had had what I called political experience in the shape of Zealot agitation. Judas said that he was the only one of us who knew anything about the administration of money—this, of course, led to a denial by Matthew, who reminded us that he had constantly had large sums passing through his hands. Thomas thereupon remarked with a sneer that "through" was hardly the right word. And at once we were in the middle of a fierce quarrel.

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I remember one evening on this journey south. We had reached a village tired out. On the way we had been quarrelling as usual. After our meal was finished, Jesus called one of the group of children, who were watching him fascinated from a corner of the room (Jesus had an irresistible attraction for children, and they for him). The little fellow came forward without hesitation. Jesus took him on his knee, and spoke to us earnestly, telling us that we could not possibly have any place at all in his Kingdom unless we became as simple and humble as that little child.

He went on, indeed, to identify himself with such children in a remarkable way. He said that our treatment of children and our attitude towards children was in itself the standard of our treatment of, and attitude towards, Jesus himself, and not only so, but the standard of our attitude towards God as well.

Then he told us the story of the Lost Sheep, the one lost sheep out of ninety-nine, for whom the shepherd searched all night. He said that God sorrows as much as that shepherd did over a single little one who has gone astray, and takes as much trouble as the shepherd did to bring him safe back home again.

For the time being we were impressed by this teaching about the dignity and worth in God's sight of childhood, and of childlike humility and simplicity. But we soon forgot it, for the next day we were quarrelling as fiercely as ever over the dignities in the Kingdom.

## FORGIVENESS

It was after yet another of those interminable quarrels of ours about the fat posts in the Kingdom. Peter and Andrew had fallen out over some division of the prospective spoil, and though they were brothers they had been abusing each other bitterly as we trudged along. We had thought that Jesus was far enough ahead not to hear it, but when we halted that evening he called us around him at once, and told us about the necessity for brotherly forgiveness.

Peter listened with a somewhat cynical impatience, and when Jesus had finished asked with a sneer how many times forgiveness was to be accorded to one's erring brother, seven times (as some of the Rabbis taught), or oftener? As he asked, he kept his eyes significantly fixed on Andrew.

It was clear enough to those of us who knew what kind of talk had been passing between those two brothers that afternoon that Peter was finding it uncommonly hard to forgive Andrew even once.

Then Jesus told us one of the finest of all his stories—the one about the King whose Diwan had been cheating him and misappropriating the public money to the amount of several millions. The evil Minister was caught, and was to be sold into slavery, together with all his family, as a means of liquidating some at least of his debt. In desperation he fell at his master's feet, beseeching mercy; and the King forgave him freely, just as God forgives us. Then he went out, and dragged off to prison a humble clerk in the government service who owed him a hundred pence.



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Peter's face was a study as he listened to this story, and to the conclusion of it, in which Jesus told us of the King's wrath against the evil Minister when he heard of his relentlessness towards his humble debtor. It was an excellent lesson for Peter!

## THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

ON the way south we passed through Nazareth. All of us knew what had happened on the previous occasion when Jesus had visited his home village. We knew also how unconvinced his family and fellow-villagers still were of his greatness, although the rest of Galilee had been filled with the fame of his doings.

We passed an uncomfortable, even a dangerous, night in the detestable place. The people attempted no actual violence on this occasion, but the Prophet's family were openly scornful. If he was able to do such marvels, why did he not go to Jerusalem and do them there, and thus establish his right to national leadership? This kind of thing was said with a bitter sneer, partly through complete disbelief in his greatness and partly through jealousy. They did not believe in his Messiah-hood; and if they had believed in it, they would have hated him for it, because he was their brother. They were not pleasant people, those brothers of the Prophet!

Of course, every Jew who possibly can goes up to the Feast of Tabernacles; and when we reached Jerusalem it was filled with enormous crowds of pilgrims. A large proportion of these came from our part of the world; and we found, as soon as we reached the city, that there was a very general feeling amongst the crowds that Jesus' retirement of the past few weeks and the measures which he had taken to reduce his popularity were only a case of "stepping back in order to jump off better", and that now was the time when he would declare himself.

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We arrived a little late for the opening of the Feast, and things were in full swing when Jesus first entered the Temple and began to teach in the outer court. The sensation created by his appearance was profound. The religious leaders sent officers to arrest him, but they did not dare to carry out their orders on account of the enthusiasm of the crowds, large numbers of whom—especially when they saw some diseased people healed by the Prophet—were firmly convinced that he was the Messiah.

In his teaching Jesus was absolutely plain-spoken regarding the spiritual nature of his Kingdom; but it was extraordinary (or at least it seems extraordinary to me as I look back now) with what unhesitating unanimity all sections of the people agreed in misunderstanding him. When he spoke of his approaching death the priests and rulers were alarmed, because they thought that he was alluding to his departure for a campaign amongst the Jews scattered up and down through the Empire. They were sure that such a campaign would be aimed at upsetting their own authority, and at dissuading the scattered Jews from making the annual pilgrimage, which brought such large gains to their own pockets.

When he spoke of himself as the Light of the World the Pharisees taunted him with self-advertisement.

When he spoke of their attempts to kill him they said he was mad.

When he warned them they would die in their sins and never come to heaven, whither he was going, they said he intended to commit suicide.

When he spoke of their bondage to sin they re-

sponded with fatuous self-satisfaction that they were free-born children of Abraham.

When he told them that if they were true children of Abraham they would follow Abraham's example and seek to do God's will, they replied that he was a Samaritan outcast and a raving lunatic.

His words about eternal life moved them only to fiercer and fiercer scorn and derision.

Finally, even there in the Temple, these priests and Pharisees took up stones to stone him to death.

I heard afterwards that Nicodemus—the member of the Sacred Council who had come to visit Jesus by night during his previous stay in Jerusalem—tried to stand up for him in the Council, and to oppose the arrangements for his arrest and death. But all that he got for his pains was a delicate insinuation that he also was one of Jesus' followers, and might very possibly share his fate if he did not take care!

The popular enthusiasm for Jesus as the Messiah was, of course, dismissed by these priests and Pharisees as one more proof that the common people, who know and care nothing for the Law, are accursed.

## THE SINFUL WOMAN

MANY were the tricks by which the Scribes and Pharisees sought to discredit our Master with the people, or to bring him into trouble with the civil government.

One such trick I remember especially well. Right in the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles, when he was teaching the people in the courtyard of the Temple, a deputation of his enemies came to him dragging a wretched woman whom they had caught in a shameful sin. They approached him with mock deference, and giving him the title of Master (which we all knew to be a piece of subtle derision) they asked him solemnly to pronounce judgment in her case.

Everyone around at once perceived how awkward was the dilemma in which they had thus set Jesus. If he pronounced for the Law, which bade that a woman taken in such a sin should be put to death by stoning, then he would be usurping the office of the civil power and thus transgressing the laws of Rome; for the Romans have taken away from us Jews the right of inflicting the death penalty. But if, on the other hand, he declared that mercy should be shown to her, he would be setting aside the Holy Law, and declaring that his own authority was greater than that of God's revelation to Moses. In either case, his enemies hoped, he would be publicly discredited.

The crowd immediately perceived what was in the wind, and pressed eagerly around to see how Jesus would escape from the difficulty. I remember the

undisguised smiles of triumph on the faces of the woman's accusers.

For a minute or two Jesus would not look up. I think he could scarcely bear to see the poor woman's agony of shame and fear, for if he had pronounced for her death, nothing could have saved her, whatever the Romans might have had to say about it afterwards. (I fancy, by the way, that the better sort among the woman's accusers half hoped that Jesus might condemn her, and that thus he might be forced into commitment against Rome.)

Finally, he looked up, and gazed round at the cowering woman, the eager crowd, the Scribes and Pharisees with their ill-concealed and scornful triumph, and at us disciples, who looked anxious enough, no doubt.

Then he spoke, and all he said was, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone."

For a moment or two no one understood exactly what he meant. Then there were murmurs of approval and delight from the crowd—I have told you that the avarice and cruelty of those religious leaders were well known. The woman raised her head, with a glint of hope in her eyes. The Scribes and Pharisees began to look embarrassed and foolish; one or two of them even appeared to be conscience-stricken. One by one they vanished; and John, who at times showed an uncanny faculty for knowing instinctively what Jesus would like, got the rest of us to persuade the crowds to retire a little way, so that Jesus might have the chance of a word with the woman.

What he said to her I do not know, but at any rate

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she sprang up and ran rapidly past us out of the Temple with a new look of hope and of determination upon her face.

But the Scribes and Pharisees did not forget or forgive their public discomfiture on that occasion.

## IN GALILEE AGAIN

AFTER the Feast of Tabernacles was over we left Jerusalem and travelled back again to our own country. We took the direct route through Samaria, instead of going round to the east of Jordan, as pious Jews were wont to do, in order to avoid the risk of pollution from the heathen.

When we reached Galilee, for a few weeks there seemed to be a revival of Jesus' former popularity. He was followed everywhere by enormous crowds, many of whom were firmly convinced that he was the Messiah (of course, their sort of Messiah). He also performed countless acts of healing, and was consequently continually thronged by the sick and diseased.

As I look back now I can see that there was a note of impending crisis in all that Jesus did and taught during those few brief weeks, and that there hung over him a cloud of disappointment and grief. I fancy that by now it had become quite clear to him that this popular enthusiasm was hollow and superficial, and that the Kingdom could never come aright amongst those who continued to hold such fatally low ideals of what the Kingdom meant.

One day a Scribe came to him with great protestations of loyalty and devotion (whether the man was genuine I doubted at the time, and still doubt; he may have been merely a spy trying to insinuate himself into the Prophet's friendship). He gave Jesus the honourable designation of Rabbi, and said that he would follow him everywhere. But Jesus said to him, rather sadly, "Count the cost before you join



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me: remember, I am more homeless than the birds and the beasts."

Another would-be disciple said that he would come and follow Jesus as soon as his old father no longer needed his help and care; but Jesus saw that he was trying to evade the sacrifice of discipleship, and told him that in that case he would be too late, for the work of the Kingdom was urgent.

Another, who came from a distant village, wanted just a few days to go back home and make final arrangements, and bid farewell to his friends. But Jesus saw that he too was making excuses for his lack of readiness to commit himself. He told him bluntly that the affairs of the Kingdom were urgent, and that no one who once put his hand to the plough and then looked back again was fit for the task of spreading that Kingdom.

I am convinced now that Jesus believed that at any moment the hatred of his enemies might gather head and sweep him away to destruction. He must have been feeling terribly discouraged when he saw how the crowds wanted only healing and free food (for memories were still vivid amongst them of the feeding of the Five Thousand), and how even we disciples, in spite of our countless opportunities of learning the truth, were still spending all our spare time in quarrelling as to who should get the chief posts in his Empire. It must have been a time of the deepest gloom—even of despair—for our Master.

However, towards the end of this stay in Galilee there came to him a day of real and profound joy. He had sent out seventy of us in all directions for a few days' work on our own account. We were to take

the absolute minimum of personal baggage—not even a change of clothing, and of course no means of defence, although in Galilee, under the benign rule of Herod Antipas, brigands were by no means unknown. We were to heal the sick (he had prayed with us that God might give us this power), and we were to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God (he had drilled us well in his conception of the Kingdom, though I fear that most of us, like myself, were very far from receiving his teaching aright, and held one view in our hearts while we taught—or pretended to teach—another with our lips).

Before we went out he made to us another solemn pronouncement—which some of us, I fear, received very ungraciously—regarding the fact that pagan cities like Tyre and Sidon, or even dens of hideous wickedness like ancient Sodom, were more likely to be found acceptable in God's sight than our own Galilean cities, which had shown such hard-hearted callousness to his teaching and example. Little as we liked these outbursts of cosmopolitanism (attacks of anti-patriotism I fear I myself called them) we had become somewhat used to them by now, and regarded them as a regrettable but inevitable accompaniment of Jesus' teaching.

We had a splendid time on that expedition. Everywhere we found the people eager to hear about the coming Kingdom (I am not sure that all of us were very conscientious in our description of what kind of a Kingdom it was to be). Everywhere we found that we had extraordinary power over disease and insanity.

When we returned to Jesus and told him joyfully of what had been happening, he was filled with great

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gladness. He took us apart for quiet prayer to God; and I well remember the prayer which he uttered on that occasion. He gave joyful thanks to God that His great truth and power, for which philosophers had sought in vain, had been revealed to and through simple and ignorant souls such as ours. Then came a time of communion between himself and his Father, which was very wonderful indeed to hear (for then, as often, Jesus was praying aloud). Finally, he told us that we were fortunate indeed in seeing the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah, whom many ancient kings and prophets had desired in vain to see.

We heard what he said with very mingled feelings. If only (we said to ourselves) he had been a *real* Messiah, and his Kingdom the right kind of kingdom!

## THE EXORCIST

DURING this time in Galilee, just before Jesus left his own native region for ever, an event occurred which, as I look back on it now, seems to me to be of considerable significance as showing forth the spirit of his work.

When the seventy of us, whom Jesus had sent out, returned from our few days' tour through the villages, John told us with great indignation that at one of the places which he and James had visited—it was an obscure little village somewhere down near to the sea-coast—they had found an exorcist, who was actually using the name of Jesus as a spell for casting out demons from the insane. Of course they had told him that he had no business to use the name of our Master, since he was not one of ourselves; for by that time we disciples had come to look upon this power of healing which Jesus had given us as a private and peculiar right of our own. We regarded it as a legitimate reward for all the discomfort and hard work which we had to put up with in following the Prophet, in sharing his dangers, and in restraining the undue importunity of the crowds. One or two of us (or so I have good reason to believe—and I could give you names if I wished) had even felt it quite right to make some small pecuniary gain from the use of this wonderful power; for after all "the labourer is worthy of his hire". I myself had not gone as far as this, but I could quite understand the point of view of those who had.

So you may well understand that we assured John

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that he had acted quite rightly in forbidding the exorcist to use the name of Jesus unless he was one of our own company; for he was infringing, as it were, our own proprietary rights.

Next evening John laid the matter before Jesus, first saying a few well-chosen words about the great joy and privilege which it had been to go out and work for the Kingdom amongst the villages in that way, and to see everywhere the people's interest in, and enthusiasm for, the Prophet. Then he mentioned the case of the exorcist, and said how he had felt him to be trespassing on our rights, and had therefore forbidden him to use Jesus' name in this way unless he became one of our own body.

To our surprise Jesus did not seem to share John's point of view in the least. Apparently he cared very little for our legitimate privileges in the matter, or even for the fact that it would be inviting disaster to allow every ignorant quack to use his name, without any regard to credentials or character.

All that Jesus seemed to care about was whether or no the sick were healed and the insane restored to their senses.

This was typical of the lamentably unpractical attitude which the Prophet took up in regard to all manner of ordinary business affairs. Very often Judas was in a state of positive despair about it; for he, of course, was a practical business man.

## THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM

AFTER this short tour in Galilee, Jesus—very much against our will—decided to return once more to Jerusalem in order to be present at the Feast of the Dedication. We warned him urgently about the dangers which awaited him in the capital. During his last visit we had all been expecting disaster from hour to hour. At any moment the malice of the priests and the Pharisees might have found means of doing him to death, as a punishment for his denunciations of their manipulation of the Temple and the Law. If he put himself into their power again, there could scarcely be any hope of his escape.

Nowadays he was constantly speaking to us about the necessity of his death. He kept on saying that so only could sin be conquered and the Kingdom of God rightly established. We still believed in his Messiah-hood—how could anyone not believe in it who constantly saw the marvellous works of healing which he performed? But commitment to the national cause—which was the only kind of effective and practical Messiah-hood which we desired—seemed to be as far off as ever. And we were beginning to be genuinely alarmed lest his views about the patient suffering of evil on the one hand, and his fearless courage on the other, should cause some great tragedy, and put an untimely end to his career before the declaration of Insurrection could take place.

For Jesus was beyond all comparison the bravest man that I have ever known. He seemed to revel in taking impossible risks, in facing—without any real

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need, as it seemed to us—the diabolical malevolence of his enemies, right in their own strongholds. And he faced it absolutely defenceless.

I can assure you that it took some courage to follow him on this occasion. Galileans were never very popular in Jerusalem. During our last visit, in spite of the support of other Galilean pilgrims, we had been constantly insulted and threatened by the priestly and legal party—who, of course, were men of great influence and power. They had given us very plain indications of what they intended to do with our Master and ourselves if we appeared there again. We should probably be called upon to perish with him. And whilst we would eagerly have given our lives in an honest attempt to establish the Messianic Kingdom and to drive out the Romans, none of us had the very smallest desire to be sacrificed like sheep in defence of fantastic principles regarding suffering love.

All of these considerations (except the last) we laid before Jesus, and we used all our influence in endeavouring to prevent his going back to Jerusalem. We begged him and besought him. We spoke of the cruelty to ourselves, to our families, to our small children, and so forth. We spoke of our country, and of the great things he might do for her. John even spoke of the world, and of how Jesus, if he would only be reasonably cautious, might come to exercise an influence far beyond the borders of Palestine. (John knew the kind of argument which was likely to appeal to him.)

But nothing which we said could move him for one moment from his determination. He set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem; and after a very

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considerable amount of grumbling we went with him. I am surprised now, I must say, that we did so, considering the state of mind which we were in, and considering also what happened afterwards. But you must remember that we had just come through a period of revived popularity, and that his prestige was almost as high as it ever had been, both with ourselves and with the people of Galilee generally.



## THE SAMARITAN VILLAGE

WE had left Galilee for the last time, and were travelling south once more towards Jerusalem for the Feast of the Dedication.

It had been a long and tiring day, that first day of our march. It was winter, and a freezingly cold wind was blowing across the high uplands of Samaria. Jesus had walked all day ahead of us, lost in thought—thought, no doubt, concerning what would happen during this visit to the capital. Every now and then we would hear him praying aloud, in a tone of almost terrible earnestness. We disciples had been walking some little distance behind. I expect that our conversation had been on the usual topic—who would get the best posts in the approaching Kingdom? Thomas, I remember, had been in a very pessimistic mood (he often was), and had been enlarging on the horrors which lay ahead of us all in Jerusalem.

As dusk was falling we drew near a village. Jesus halted till we came up, and asked Peter, James, and John to go forward into the village in order to announce the approach of our company, and to ask if we might have accommodation for the night. Whilst they were gone the rest of us sat down and waited, in spite of the bitter cold, for we were very tired.

After a few minutes we heard shouting from the village, and the barking of dogs, followed by the sound of blows. A moment or two later our three companions came rushing out of the place in wild disorder, pursued by numbers of vicious dogs and by men and boys, who beat them with sticks and

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flung stones at them. When they came up to us, and had recovered their breath, they told us that the first householder whom they had approached with their request had turned upon them and cursed them roundly, because they were Jews and were travelling to Jerusalem. He had set his dogs on them and had roused the whole village to drive them out. They had scarcely escaped with their lives.

As you know, Jews as a rule have absolutely no dealings with Samaritans, and the average Jew would no more dream of asking for accommodation in a Samaritan village, as Jesus had done, than of eating pork. Jesus had long before broken through this racial barrier, and generally had been kindly and courteously received by the Samaritans when he had asked for leave to stay in their villages. But this place was evidently especially bigoted (or else had suffered especially unfortunate experiences from Jewish pride and intolerance in the past); and the attitude of the people was clearly one of passionate resentment against anything which they might regard as patronizing condescension on the part of Jews.

Thus it was that our Master had become an outcast of the outcasts.

You may imagine how the rest of us felt about it. I fear I myself said openly, and in a tone of no little triumph, "This is what comes of casting patriotism to the winds, and truckling to these infidel dogs." Even the gentle-spirited John, when he had recovered from his fright, besought Jesus to use his divine power in order to call down fire from heaven and burn the place to ashes. We were angry men that night, every one of us.

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But Jesus would hear nothing of punishment and vengeance. He told us that God did not deal with sinners by destroying them, but by saving them, through His love. We must go on to another village.

By this time night had fallen. We were very hungry and very cold. It was eight miles to the nearest place where we could expect to get any entertainment.

You may imagine our state of mind as we set off on those eight miles. Never did we come nearer to open mutiny against Jesus. It was not only the insult to ourselves and the extreme discomfort to which we were subjected: far worse than this was the deadly insult to our nation and to our national faith. We were sick at heart when we realized that this was the pass to which following our "Messiah" had brought us.

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

THE next day we passed out of Samaria, crossing the Jordan into Peraea. You may imagine with what zest and with what bitter curses we disciples shook off the dust of that wicked country from our feet. That night we stayed at a small town near the river, where a crowd gathered as soon as Jesus appeared.

In the crowd there was a student and exponent of the Holy Law, who, having no doubt heard of Jesus' unorthodoxy, tried as usual to get him to make some heretical statement which might be useful afterwards as evidence in case it came to a trial for blasphemy.

This Scribe came forward with mock humility, gave Jesus the title of Rabbi, and asked him how he might obtain eternal life in Paradise after he was dead. Jesus asked him (as he frequently did) to answer his own question. The Scribe then pointed to the little box which he wore tied on his forehead, and which contained a charm against evil spirits, consisting of a slip of parchment inscribed with the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." The Scribe recited these words in a very pious and unctuous manner, and added to them the common quotation, which is used by the Rabbis as a summary of the manward aspects of the Holy Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Jesus was pleased with this answer, and told the Scribe that if he followed those two precepts he should obtain eternal life.

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But the Scribe (who, like all his clan, was fond of argument) proceeded to ask for a definition of the word "neighbour".

Then Jesus told us one of his marvellous stories. It was a most interesting and striking story; but to us disciples, after our experience of Samaritan hospitality on the previous day, and to myself especially as a patriotic Zealot, and indeed to everyone there as loyal Jews, the thing was completely and ruinously spoilt by the fact that Jesus took as his illustration of the ideal Good Neighbour—whom do you think? You will scarcely credit me when I tell you—a Samaritan!

We were sick at heart that night, we who were his disciples. We had spent years in his service. Again and again we had endeavoured, gently and courteously, to let him know how keenly we felt on these questions of patriotic loyalty. We had acclaimed him as Messiah. We had saved him a thousand times from being trodden to death by the crowds. We had risked our lives in his service. And now once more, close after that horrible experience on the preceding evening, he had deliberately and gratuitously outraged our finest and most sacred sensibilities!

Before an audience of patriotic Jews, in answer to a thoughtful and respectable Jewish inquirer, in the presence of twelve men who the night before had been forced to walk eight extra miles by Samaritan insolence, he took a *Samaritan* as his model of neighbourliness! A filthy, unbelieving, disreputable, non-Jewish *Samaritan*.

And that was not all. For in the course of the story he went out of his way to insult two pious Jews, who,

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

just because they were unwilling to break the Holy Law by incurring ceremonial pollution, had refused to touch what they presumably thought to be a corpse.

Oh, it was too much, too much!

## MARTHA AND MARY

AFTER we had passed through Peraea, the region to the east of the Jordan, and had climbed the steep and toilsome ascent from Jericho, we approached Jerusalem, a few days before the Feast of the Dedication was due to begin. We disciples were in a very nervous and apprehensive state of mind. We felt very doubtful indeed as to the kind of reception which was awaiting us in the capital city. We regarded the occasion as anything but favourable for the fulfilment of our dearly cherished wishes regarding a public commitment to the cause of our country, and a decisive manifestation of Messianic power. I suppose, if truth must be told, we were horribly afraid.

Jesus had some cousins living in a small village called Bethany, close to Jerusalem. They were well-to-do people, but were in great trouble, for the father had recently died. The young son, Lazarus, was trying to look after the farm, and the daughters, Martha and Mary, were keeping the home together. Their mother had died some years before. Fortunately Martha was a very good housekeeper and an excellent manager. Indeed, she was almost too excellent a manager; for I have never been in any house (and in the course of our constant travels I was in a good many) where one had to mind one's behaviour more carefully for fear of offending one's hostess, and was consequently more uncomfortable. The good lady had a tongue like a file, and used it without mercy on anyone who displeased her.

Mary was just the opposite of her sister. She was

very quiet and gentle, spoke very little, and was very particular about her religious duties (Martha was perfunctory in regard to these).

It will be a long time before I forget what happened that first evening we spent there. Martha had been somewhat naturally upset by the arrival of so many visitors all of a sudden (Lazarus, who was a very generous-hearted fellow, had insisted on our all coming in to spend the night). It was a biggish establishment; but still Martha was hard put to it to accommodate and feed so many new arrivals. She was bustling around everywhere, lashing the servants with her tongue, and making things move with a vengeance. We disciples were seated as unobtrusively as possible close to the door, and were devoutly wishing that Lazarus had not insisted on our coming in. Jesus was in the inner courtyard talking to Lazarus. Mary was sitting on the ground close to them, and was listening eagerly to everything that Jesus said.

I was looking through the archway from where we were sitting, and suddenly saw Martha come rushing up to Jesus. She asked him, in a loud and agitated voice, whether he thought it was right and proper for Mary to leave her to carry on, quite alone and unaided, the work of providing for so many guests. She told him to bid Mary come at once and help her.

Jesus looked up with a smile, and said to her in a tone which at once disarmed all opposition, and charmed the angry woman into a good temper: "Martha, we only need one simple dish. Let her stay. Mary has chosen the best food of all. Don't drag her away from it."



## THE MAN BORN BLIND

WE disciples were by no means sorry to move on next day from Bethany to Jerusalem, for we found our hostess rather awe-inspiring. As we entered the city gate we saw a blind beggar sitting there. We stopped and talked to him, and found that he had been blind from his birth. On hearing that, John, who was fond of this kind of puzzle, asked Jesus what was the reason for the man's blindness. Was it due to sin done by his parents before his birth, as is taught by the Law, or was it due to some sin done by himself in a previous existence, as some foreigners teach? We all crowded round to hear what answer Jesus would give to this question, for poor men like ourselves are generally a good deal interested in the reason for the suffering in the world.

Jesus told John that suffering like this was not to be put down to sin at all, on the part either of the man's parents or of himself in a previous existence. He said that we must take our eyes off the suffering and fix them on the wonderful love of God, which could save the man from his suffering. He told us too that this same love of God must work through ourselves towards all who are in need. He even said that the wonders which that love would be able to perform through us would be greater than any it had performed through himself, though he was God's Light in the world.

Then he healed the blind man.

Now the day when this happened was the Sabbath day. The Jerusalem Pharisees and Elders had been on

## THE MAN BORN BLIND

the look-out for the Prophet's coming, and great was the excitement and joy amongst them when they knew that he had done this deed of healing on the Holy Day; for to do the work of a doctor on the Sabbath was strictly forbidden in their Law-books. They did not dare, as yet, to attack Jesus directly on the point; but they found the man whose sight he had restored and began to bully him with threats of excommunication in order to prevent his spreading the news of how he had been healed.

The man, however, was an independent sort of fellow. Like most other beggars he had a ready tongue with a sting to it; and he gave the pundits quite as much as he got, indeed rather more, for he ended up with a gentle insinuation that the reason for all their fuss about the Prophet was that they themselves wished to become his disciples.

This raised a laugh against the pious busy-bodies, whose hostility to Jesus was well known. They went away cursing both the beggar and his healer; and we heard soon afterwards that they had applied to the beggar a rule which they had recently made for the excommunication of anyone who should be held to regard Jesus as the Messiah. For the rich and respectable, or for pious followers of the Law, this excommunication was a terrible thing. It meant that the man to whom it was applied was treated as if he were a leper, being debarred from all social relations with decent people, and of course from all religious fellowship. It was a complete boycott.

Of course we disciples and our Master had been boycotted like this for long enough, so far as our relations with the professional leaders of religion went,

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though they had never yet dared to pronounce formal excommunication upon us (they were too much afraid of the people). None the less, Jesus was very sorry for the beggar. The excommunication would not do him any real harm religiously, but it would mean that he got no alms in future from the faithful and pious sections of the population (who were also, of course, the wealthiest). So Jesus took the trouble to search him out. The man was soon full of gratitude and devotion, rejoicing in his restored sight, and caring nothing for the malice of the religious leaders.

But the fact of this excommunication having been possible showed the increased power and daring of these bigoted opponents of our Master, who were (as he told us) far more truly blind than the beggar had been, in spite of their expansive claims to spiritual authority and insight.

## THE CHALLENGE

IN his talk with the man who had been born blind, Jesus had spoken to him of his Messiah-hood, and it was this which had aroused the man's enthusiastic devotion. The news soon got about that the Prophet was now definitely prepared to accept Messiah-hood (you know how quickly these things spread amongst fanatical crowds with whom politics and religion are one); and on the next day a great crowd was awaiting Jesus when he came into the Temple. It was, I remember, a very cold day, and we had to stay on the sunny side of the courtyard in order to keep warm.

Almost at once the great question was asked. The spokesman of the crowd was a well-known Zealot from northern Galilee—a man with whom I had had a good deal to do in the old days. He said how wonder-struck they had all been at the healing of the man born blind. They did not believe a word of what the Pharisees said about Jesus—that he was insane, and that his marvellous powers were in truth the deeds of the devils of madness. Who had ever heard of a mad man opening the eyes of a man born blind? They were convinced that he could be none other than the Messiah, and to their great joy they had heard that on the previous day he had actually told the man whom he had healed that he was the Messiah. Let him keep them in suspense no longer. They were ready to follow him anywhere, and to do anything he might direct in the sacred cause of their country and their country's God. If he were the Messiah, let him declare himself openly, and the Kingdom was his in a few hours.

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There were many thousands of them ready in the city—good hardy Galileans, men of their hands, mountain-bred, utterly reckless of their lives. With such men to back him, in addition to his divine power, he could not possibly fail.

You know how rapidly situations like this develop. Five minutes before all was peaceful. Now there was insurrection, the Messianic Kingdom, the world-rule of God's people, everything we had hoped and prayed for trembling in the balance. All that was needed was one strong word. The Leader was there. We knew what was in him. If our country was to be saved, now was the time.

If ever I prayed it was then, while that Zealot was speaking. I besought Jehovah, with desperate urgency, that His Prophet might not fail; that he might be worthy of our great past and of our wonderful future: that he might be worthy of God's own high calling.

The others, I know, were feeling exactly as I did. I caught sight of John's face, an agony of expectant anxiety. Peter too: he was half across the line already, his hand clutching a sword which he had concealed under his long cloak, his lips parted to shout Hosanna—the battle-cry.

But no—ah, the bitterness of it! The opportunity passed once more.

The Prophet would not commit himself. He simply said: "You must judge of my Messiah-hood for yourselves, by the kind of things I do." We knew well enough what he meant—that he was not their kind of Messiah, but that he worked through pity and love. Think of taking refuge in pity and love at

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a moment like that! The chance of a lifetime, of a thousand lifetimes: and for our outraged country!

Then he went on to speak of his being the Good Shepherd, and about what it meant to be one of his sheep. Oh, it was too tragic!

He finished up with one of his mysterious sayings about his oneness with God; and with the fickleness of a crowd—they were terribly disappointed of course—they took up stones to kill him for blasphemy.

How we got him out I hardly know. For myself, the pain and shame of it were so bitter that I would have welcomed any death. In fact, I was so disgusted that I left the others to look after the Prophet, and came away at once, by myself.

## PRAYER

AFTER that terrible disappointment, it was no longer possible for us to stay in Jerusalem. The tremendous loss in popularity which the incident immediately brought about meant also that the power and the malice of the priests and rulers were correspondingly increased. There was nothing for it, if Jesus wished to avoid arrest, but for him and the others of us to leave the city at once, and to retire to some remote district.

In spite of what he had been telling us for some months past about the necessity for his suffering in Jerusalem, our Master evidently did not consider that the right time had yet come. He listened to our urgings, and consented to go with us into Peraea again, to the east of the Jordan; and in that district for two or three months longer he continued his training of us disciples.

I remember what he taught us, in that quiet interval, about prayer. I have told you, I think, about his own special prayer which he gave to us, the most striking thing about which were the first two words, "Our Father" (does it not seem strange to think of speaking to Jehovah as "Our Father"—and yet, if you try it, you will find that there is a certain element in you which can appreciate this mode of appeal even more than that of "Lord of Hosts", or "Judge of the Wicked", or those other martial and legal terms of which we patriotic Jews are so fond).

He gave us some very remarkable illustrations on this matter of prayer. He told us (as he had told us

before) that we must think of God as One who loved even the small sparrows which nested in the roof of the house in which we were staying.

He told us to think of Him as a Father who is more anxious to give us the good gifts which we need than a loving earthly father is to give his children food.

He told us that even an unjust judge or a miserly friend will grant the requests of those that ask them: and how much more, then, will God give us what we need, since He is loving and fatherly.

I fear that we heard him with but perfunctory attention. All this religious teaching we regarded as a kind of amiable weakness in a man obviously great and profoundly lovable, but lamentably neglectful of the realities of life (which to us meant the cause of our country) and fatally incapable of action.



## THE CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES

As I look back upon that time in Peraea, the chief thing that I remember about it is the growing vehemence of the opposition offered to Jesus by the Pharisees and the Lawyers, and the other religious leaders. Jesus met this opposition fearlessly, and on many occasions spoke very plainly both to the Pharisees themselves and to the huge multitudes which again came around him. He tried repeatedly to bring home to them the total inadequacy of the official view of religion.

I remember an occasion on which a Pharisee had asked us to lunch with him, apparently on purpose to see whether or no Jesus went in for all the elaborate ceremonial ablutions which the orthodox interpretation of the Holy Law requires before meals. When he saw that Jesus did not do so, the Pharisee (in spite of the fact that the Prophet was his guest) expressed his scandalized horror in no measured terms. In return, Jesus told him how superficial and unsatisfactory was the Pharisaic ideal of righteousness, since their scrupulous attention to ceremonial details was accompanied by cruel extortion and by other forms of moral wickedness. What mattered, he said, was not the special manner in which the outside of the dish was washed, but whether or no the food inside the dish was given generously to the poor. If their hearts were merciful and loving, they need not trouble about ceremonial ablutions.

On another occasion I remember that we were

## CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES

watching a Pharisee who had been gathering some vegetables from a small patch of garden which he kept before his house. He had plucked some few handfuls of mint, and he was carefully counting every single stalk in order to give exactly one-tenth to the service of religion. We happened to know that this particular Pharisee was a cruel and hard-hearted landlord to the tenants of a few wretched hovels which he owned. Jesus told him that justice and the love of God were far more important than his meticulous exactitude with regard to tithes.

One Sabbath day we had been watching the Pharisees walking pompously to the local synagogue, and when they reached it going forward to the front, where they occupied the best seats. Jesus did not increase their love for him when he told them that they were hidden tombs, which defile those who unwittingly touch them—you know how horrified Pharisees are of anything connected with a dead body!

He was very outspoken against the Lawyers also, because they insist with such zeal on everyone's obeying every last detail of the Holy Law, and yet they are always inventing ingenious legal evasions, by which they themselves are enabled to avoid the inconvenience of following their own rules. Of course they escape the risk of anyone else inventing such subterfuges for himself, by forbidding any ordinary person to presume to interpret the Scriptures!

When they heard themselves condemned in this way the rage of the Pharisees and Lawyers knew no bounds. You see, they still command great prestige amongst the common people on account of their patriotic services in the past; and this prestige is

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worth a good deal to the leaders of religion from an economic point of view. The Temple fees and tribute, for instance, are an immensely valuable asset to the priestly class; and though there is no love lost between Pharisees and priests, yet they all seem to combine instinctively in defence of the established system of belief and practice, and against any new influence which threatens to undermine that system in the thought of the common people.

That was why the whole lot of them—Pharisees, Lawyers, Scribes, Sadducees, Priests—united in savage opposition to Jesus. His condemnations of their thought and practice became very popular with the common people (who knew well enough what these pious pundits were like in private life), and it was obvious that unless something were done to silence him—and that at once—their prestige and their revenues would be very seriously imperilled.

We told Jesus again and again that his zeal was outrunning his discretion in this matter (most of us had a tender place in our hearts for the Pharisees' patriotism). But nothing which we might say to him on the subject seemed to have the slightest effect. All that he could see was that the Pharisees were oppressing the poor and disgracing the name of religion.

## COVETOUSNESS

ALL sorts of queer people used to come to Jesus in those days in order to try to get favour or help from him. We disciples became quite expert in our ability to guess, just from a man's look and appearance, what kind of an axe he was going to ask the Prophet to grind for him.

I remember a fellow coming along one day who had had a quarrel with his brother about the division of his family property, their father having recently died. He evidently imagined that he might get the Prophet to exercise influence on behalf of his claim, without any evidence regarding its justice! He expressed great admiration for Jesus' teaching and considerable devotion to his person; but this did not seem to have any effect on the Prophet's mind, for he entirely repudiated the position of a judge or an arbitrator on property-disputes, and he used the occasion to give the people (some of whom needed it badly) a few very plain words regarding the evils of covetousness.

It was then that he told us his famous story about the Rich Fool—the man who flattered himself that now he could retire and live the rest of his life in comfort and luxury, but whom death forced to leave all his wealth that very night.

He went on to give some very extraordinary teaching about the bearing of a genuine trust in God on one's attitude to worldly cares and financial necessities. He told us that if we were really God's children, there was not the slightest use in our worrying about these things. All that was needful was that we should seek

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to do God's will and to establish His Kingdom, and then everything necessary to our well-being in the world would be given to us. He even told us to sell all our property in order that we might be able to help the poor better. And he warned us that if we had many possessions on this earth we should find it extremely difficult to fix our minds aright on the heavenly riches.

You should have seen the faces of the crowd as the Prophet gave them this teaching! I think we Jews must be especially liable to the kind of covetousness of which he spoke—and you will remember that the fault which he brought up constantly against the Pharisees was their extortion. Listening to him at that time were not only a number of Pharisees, and of course the man who wanted Jesus to divide his father's inheritance in his favour, but also tax-gatherers, merchants, Jews of the Dispersion (who were apt to regard Gentiles as Egyptians to be rightfully spoiled), and all manner of other people, every one of whom was at heart inordinately fond of money.

And here was the Prophet telling us to pay no regard to money, not to seek for it, to get rid of what we had in order to benefit others, and to trust God for all that was needful to our life!

As he spoke to them I realized that the task of convincing these hard-headed Jews of the truth of his teaching in this respect was much harder than would have been the task of convincing the most idolatrous of Gentiles regarding the true nature of the One God.

I can still see the crowds as they dispersed after that day's teaching—shrugging their shoulders and muttering that he was a visionary and a fanatic. They were

keen enough to hear him as long as they thought that there was a chance of a declaration of Messiahhood, or of war against Rome. They thoroughly enjoyed (or some of them did) his attacks on the priests and religious leaders. They would listen with interest to his stories about true religion.

But when he began to touch on business affairs. . . .

## THE NEW TEACHING

I HAVE told you already that for some months now—indeed ever since the people tried to make him King because they saw that he could give them free food—the teaching of Jesus seemed to have undergone a change. He no longer spoke of growth and steady development in the affairs of the Kingdom of God. He tended more and more to speak as though there were some tremendous crisis swiftly coming upon us, for which at all costs we must be prepared.

His stories now were about servants, faithful and unfaithful, who watched or did not watch for the coming of their Master. He was constantly speaking of the sudden and unexpected arrival of some great event, like the unannounced return of a rich man who had given his property to stewards to look after during his absence, or the sudden arrival of the Bridegroom at the house where the wedding-feast was to be held. He warned us to discern the signs of the times and to gather from them that disaster was near. He foretold on one terrible occasion the destruction of our beautiful Jerusalem. He told us of the sudden taking of reckoning, as from an unfaithful steward, and of condign punishment visited on rebellious tenants. Many other stories of his, for instance the one about the Rich Fool, contained this same element of catastrophe.

At the time we did not know what to make of all this. It completely puzzled us. Indeed, some of his sayings, for example the one about the destruction of Jerusalem, made us very angry. I remember well how, after one gloomy talk of his, I took him to task,

and told him roundly that instead of discouraging the people and making them despair of the future of their country he would be better employed in actively organizing the national forces for resistance against Rome (if, as I supposed, Rome was the enemy of whose future malevolence and frightfulness he was speaking).

He answered my impertinence gently and humbly, but at the same time he gave me another and most urgent personal warning about the necessity for prayer and preparation of soul in view of what would shortly happen.

As I look back I am convinced that Jesus saw quite clearly what was coming. He foresaw not only his own death (the growing malice of his enemies, and his own determination to follow steadfastly the way of suffering patience, can have left him no possibility of doubt about that), but the fact that, Rome being as harsh and despotic as she is and we Jews as fiercely thirsty for liberty or death as we are, there is no future for our country except destruction.

By the time of this visit to Peraea he can have had little hope left that the masses of the people would give their allegiance to the ideals of the Kingdom as he held them; and hence he spoke no more in terms of its gradual all-subduing growth.

I can see, as I look back now, that we need both his teachings about the Kingdom—both the conception of its steady persistent increase like seed or leaven, and the conception of its imminent and supreme importance, beside which all other considerations sink into insignificance. Without the first we might become unpractical visionaries, without the second we might become slack and negligent.



## THE MASSACRE

ONE day, when we were in Peraea, some grim and horrible news came down from Jerusalem. I remember well how that news reached us. Jesus was teaching at the time near the Jordan, in a place where there were pleasant groves of trees, under which the crowds could rest; for it is very hot down there, even early in the year.

About midday we noticed a party of mourners coming along the path which led from the direction of Jericho. Their garments were blackened and torn, and they had scattered ashes over their heads. When they came nearer, we saw that several of them were wounded, and that there were stains of blood, as well as the usual marks of grief, on their clothing.

When they joined the company sitting under the trees, Jesus stopped his teaching and asked them what had happened. Why were they wounded and in grief?

Then one of them—a great big mountaineer from the upper slopes of Hermon, far away to the north—rose to his feet, and in fierce, short sentences, which he hissed out in a tone of concentrated bitterness, told us a story which made us clamour furiously for vengeance—and yet it was, and is still, a story common enough in our oppressed and outraged country.

Three days before a party of them from a village in Upper Galilee had come to Jerusalem for some special sacrifices. Their leader had been a man named Barabbas, of whom I had heard. He was a well-known and determined Zealot.

On entering the city they had had trouble with the Roman guard at the gate over a question of whether they were going to be allowed to retain their arms in the city or not. Hot words had passed, and they had finally forced their way through (very unwisely no doubt), arms and all. I heard afterwards that there had been quite a little battle about it. The guard had been overpowered by weight of numbers, and some of them had been killed. They are fine fellows, our Galileans, fine dangerous men.

The party of them had gone straight to the Temple for their sacrifices; and there, right in the holy place, the vengeance of the Romans had overtaken them. Probably the pilgrims had never imagined that the soldiers could be wicked enough to attack them in the Temple itself, and so were hoping to escape quietly one by one, when their religious duties were accomplished.

But Pilate, the Roman Governor, was utterly unscrupulous and cruel. He sent a strong body of soldiers right into the Temple. These fell upon the Galileans unexpectedly while they were sacrificing, killed a number of them, and captured Barabbas (his fate would be crucifixion). The rest had only escaped because they had managed to get lost in the panic-stricken Temple crowd. They had come straight down to Jesus in Peraea, for they knew, of course, that he was a Galilean, and they had heard all about his marvellous deeds. Now they appealed to him, as the destined Messiah of God, to arise in might and destroy these wicked pagans, these vile desecrators of our holy Jewish Temple, these heartless shedders of our sacred Jewish blood.

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The man's speech was wonderful. There he stood, calling Jesus to vengeance. His right arm was roughly swathed in a blood-soaked bandage. His eyes flashed. He seemed to be the spirit of our downtrodden country, summoning the greatest of her sons to save her.

Again, as in the Temple a week or two before, I lifted up my heart and prayed with feverish earnestness to Jehovah that His Prophet at last might be worthy of Him.

But no—again nothing but disappointment and shame. Deliberately, heartlessly (I can use no other words), Jesus dragged in the stale side-issue of religion. Think of talking religion at such a time!

All he could say was: "Do you think that, because they suffered thus, these Galileans were worse sinners than the rest of the Galileans? I tell you, no; unless you repent you will all perish as they did."

You see? Not merely religion instead of patriotism, but a definite and deliberate threat to all patriotic Jews that unless we adopted his views about God and repentance and so forth the Romans would slaughter us too!

Oh, it was hard to be loyal to him sometimes: or hard, rather, to know which loyalty to choose, our loyalty to him or our loyalty to our glorious country and her God.

## THE TOWER OF SILOAM

PEOPLE used to come to Jesus with all kinds of problems. You remember, for instance, the hopeful young man who thought he could persuade the Prophet to take his side in a dispute about the division of his paternal property. Then there was the frivolous question of the Sadducees, about the seven brothers. And of course there were the questions about payment of taxes, and so forth. He was continually being asked his opinion on all kinds of points, sometimes genuine difficulties, but more often dilemmas invented for the occasion in order to lead him into unorthodox and unpatriotic statements.

One day a man got up in the crowd which was listening to Jesus, and told him, with a good deal of grief, that he had just heard of his brother's tragic death. He had been one of a crowd of people sheltering under a high wall during a furious gale which had lately swept over Jerusalem. Suddenly the whole tall house, of which this wall formed one side, had collapsed, and eighteen people had been killed, including this man's brother.

Of course that was a fairly common sort of accident. They say that in Rome, for instance, the tall houses in the poorer parts of the city are so badly built that they are constantly tumbling down and killing people, even without the help of a storm.

But the man had evidently been very fond of his brother. He was much moved; and the question which was troubling him was this: was the fact that such an awful end had overtaken him to be regarded

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as proof that his brother had been especially sinful, and that therefore God had punished him in this way?

It was a very natural question to ask, was it not? There are plenty of people who say that suffering and tragedy are to be taken as proof that the man who undergoes them has been specially sinful, and is therefore being punished. Some, of course, go farther, and say that even if he has not been specially sinful himself, his parents or ancestors must have been, so that one may be called upon to suffer for the sins of one's great-great-grandfather! There are others, too, who say that when we suffer, we suffer for sins done by ourselves in previous lives.

Jesus listened to the man with a great deal of sympathy. To his last question—as to whether his brother must be regarded as a specially bad sinner—he answered emphatically “No”. He never would have anything to do with the idea that suffering is to be thought of as punishment for, and proof of, sin, either in the sufferer himself during this life or previous lives, or in his parents and ancestors. Suffering, to Jesus, was just something which called forth divine Love in order to relieve it.

On this occasion he told the listeners that the thing to do when one heard of a tragedy like that at Siloam was to remind oneself that some day death would come to oneself also. When it came, would it find us ready, or would it be a sudden horrible extinction of unprepared souls like the falling of the high house? Our hearts must be changed while yet there was time, and we must follow God's will instead of our own. Only thus could we be ready for what must some day come to all of us.

## THE CRIPPLED WOMAN

DURING this later part of his work Jesus was very seldom admitted within the walls of a synagogue—because, of course, the synagogue officials were everywhere so incensed against him that they would not allow him inside.

On one occasion, however, at a small town in a remote valley of Peraea, where there were no very influential Pharisees, we were permitted to attend the synagogue on a certain Sabbath day. Even there trouble resulted; for as Jesus was teaching the people, who had assembled in crowds to hear him, he saw amongst the congregation a poor old woman who was terribly crippled by some disease which kept her bent almost double. Thereupon he called her up to him and healed her. The presiding elder of the synagogue was scandalized at this (you know how absurdly strict they are about not performing any doctor-work on the Sabbath: if you have toothache, you may rinse your teeth with vinegar to ease it, but only on condition that you swallow the vinegar and do not spit it out again; if you have a strain, you may wash it, but not over and over again; if you have a pain anywhere, you may anoint yourself with oil, but not with wine and vinegar, and so forth). The old man got up there and then, trembling with rage and horror, and told the people (he did not dare to speak directly to Jesus) that they were breaking the Holy Law of God in coming to get healed on God's Holy Day.

But Jesus told him plainly and publicly that the whole

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position of the Pharisees with regard to the Sabbath was ridiculous, and worse than ridiculous; for it was both tyrannical and false. They permitted themselves to untie their dumb beasts on the Sabbath, and to take them down for watering, but they would not allow one of their own countrywomen, who was in bondage to disease, to be freed from that bondage on the day of rest!

Jesus spoke this more in sadness than in scorn. The presiding elder was completely silenced, and the people were filled with joy, not only at the Prophet's marvellous power over disease, but at the new and glorious freedom which he was bringing to them.

## THE PHARISEE'S MEAL

I REMEMBER an incident which occurred on another Sabbath day during that time in Peraea. Jesus had been invited to a meal at the house of a wealthy Pharisee. There was a fairly large company present, and it soon became evident that there was a plot to get the Prophet to compromise himself with regard to healing the sick on the Sabbath, for a man ill of dropsy was introduced. Everyone present sat silent, watching what Jesus would do. They would not even answer him when he asked them point-blank what they thought about healing on the Sabbath. Thereupon Jesus healed the man, and reproached them for the fact that they would save an animal, such as a bullock or a donkey which fell into a water-hole on the Sabbath day, but would not allow a human being to be healed.

This happened before the meal began, when we were all sitting in the outer room. When the servant announced that the meal was ready, everyone made a sudden dash for the inner courtyard, where it was served, in order to get the most honourable places at the table—everyone, that is, except Jesus. According to those skilled in the Law (you know how they poke their noses into every detail of our lives) certain places on a couch and in a room are more honourable than others; and since they are so careful in their definitions, you may be sure that the Lawyers are careful also to claim (and appropriate) the best places for themselves. I fear that we disciples also joined in the scramble, though I must say that we felt rather



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ashamed of ourselves when we saw that only the lowest place of all was left for our Master. However, he did not seem to mind this in the least.

Later on I happened to hear snatches of a conversation which Jesus had with his host, who, by the way, had been considerably disgusted by the discourteous behaviour of his guests (they did not seem to have the slightest respect for him). Jesus advised him in future not to invite that kind of person—men who thought themselves his equals or superiors; and reminded him, somewhat humorously, that if he did so invite them he was letting himself in for the dismal prospect of a return invitation to their houses! Instead, he should invite to his house the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, who would greatly value his kindness, although they would not be able to repay him by a return invitation.

One of the guests tried to get Jesus to make some statement with regard to his Messianic calling and intentions by remarking to him how glorious it would be to be feasting some day in the Kingdom of God, by which he meant the universal dominion of the Jews, to be set up by the heaven-sent Messiah. Jesus, however, refused to be drawn into any discussion of the subject. He just told us one of his stories—about a man who made a great feast, and invited all his rich neighbours. They refused to come, on various very inadequate pretexts. The householder then filled up their places with the poor and afflicted, from both city and country.

When I think over that story now, I believe that Jesus must have meant to teach us by it that then and there we had the chance of feasting in

the Kingdom of God, in the presence of the Messiah, and that it was only the poor and humble, who were ready to learn from him and follow his way of life, that were availing themselves of the privilege.

## COUNTING THE COST

As the days went by during that brief period in Peraea, there were for a time signs of a return of the former popularity of Jesus, so that we were reminded of those earlier days in Galilee. Multitudes of people began to come to hear him and see him, and to get their diseases healed by him. But he himself did not seem to welcome this revived interest in his work and his message. He still seemed to feel that his most important task was that of training us disciples; and from time to time he said hard things to his audiences—things which caused many to leave him in disgust.

For instance, he would say that it was now a highly dangerous thing to be interested in him. We must count the cost beforehand, and not rush blindly into peril through a passing fit of enthusiasm and emotion. He told us stories about the folly of those who start a building without making sure that they have money enough to complete it, and about the ignominious position of a ruler who provokes a neighbouring country to war without being certain that he has a strong enough army wherewith to make sure of victory.

Then he would tell his hearers, somewhat grimly, that if they wished to follow him they must be ready to take up their cross—and you know what the cross means, the shameful death of a rebellious slave, naked, starving, tortured, your eyes pecked out by crows while you are yet living. That saying about the cross disgusted many of those who had thought for a time, perhaps with a certain measure of devotion, that there

might be something in this Prophet and his message. It especially disgusted those who possessed taste and good sense. Such people feel that even to mention the cross is a little indecent. For the Prophet to say that anyone who wished to follow him must be ready to come to the cross with him—well, it was very near to a calculated insult, besides being morbidly pessimistic (to say the least of it) in one whose marvellous powers showed him to be divinely called upon to save his oppressed country.

Again, he would tell his hearers that they must be prepared "to hate", as he put it, their own families, if they wished to follow him—this was rather aggressively exaggerated, we thought. And of course he was constantly saying that if we did not renounce all that we had, we could not be his disciples. Judas used to express fervent admiration at that sentiment (he was always saying what a brilliant career he had sacrificed in order to follow Jesus, though the rest of us considered that he had his compensations, from the sacrifices of others; for he took charge of the gifts which the charitable gave to our company).

In short, it seemed at this time as though Jesus was doing all he could to dissuade people from committing themselves, at any rate without adequate thought and preparation, to his service. I can see now that the future was hanging heavily upon his mind, and that he saw well what discipleship would mean.

## LOST SHEEP, LOST COIN, LOST SONS

I MUST not omit to tell you that there was one class of people who were never tired of listening to the words of Jesus, however little enthusiasm the rich and respectable might feel for him—they were those odious creatures the tax-gatherers and their disreputable associates. Jesus seemed to have an extraordinary attraction for such people. His own life was pure, austere, beneficent. Theirs was impure, debauched, extortionate. Yet they would throng around him, listening with rapt attention to every word that he uttered. And he never drove them away—however notorious they might be for their wickedness, or however much their being with him outraged the sense of propriety in his respectable hearers. Then, as always, we patriotic and God-fearing disciples felt very keenly the stigma which his attitude towards these traitors and outcasts brought upon his whole work, and upon ourselves as his associates.

I remember very well an occasion on which a deputation of Pharisees and Scribes came to interview him on this point, and to exhort him in the name of our religion and our fatherland to dismiss from his audiences this disgraceful element, whose presence so seriously compromised his own good name and the success of his message. (Not that the Scribes and Pharisees cared a straw for Jesus' good name and the success of his message, but they knew that he would refuse to do as they suggested, and that this refusal would be one more ground for complaint against him.)

## LOST SHEEP, LOST COIN, LOST SONS

It was then that Jesus told us three of the most wonderful of all his stories, in order to explain to us how it was that he felt called upon to help and to save these sinful people most of all. Of course I did not agree with his point of view in this matter, but I shall never forget those stories.

The first story was about the Lost Sheep, whom the shepherd seeks and saves at all costs, even leaving for the time being the other sheep of his flock, who are not lost and in danger in the same way.

The second story was about a woman who lost a coin in her house, and sought it with great care and pains till she found it. Meanwhile, she had no anxiety about the other coins, which were not lost.

The third story was about the Two Lost Sons—the young ne'er-do-weel, who had squandered his money in disgraceful pleasures, and then came back to his father thoroughly sorry for his folly and sin, to be freely received and forgiven: and the pious, respectable prig, who through jealousy and prudishness refused to enter the father's house and share his joy at the return of the prodigal. As Jesus told this last story we could all see whom he meant by the younger brother and whom by the elder. We could also see which of the two he thought to be in the worse case, and farther from the joyful and love-filled Kingdom of God.

The Scribes and Pharisees did not at all appreciate those stories, though the sinners around Jesus rejoiced in them, and especially in the last one. But for me this whole story was spoilt by the fact that Jesus seemed to suggest in it that God's love, however wide, generous, and forgiving, could be extended to include

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anyone who had done a thing so filthy and un-Jewish as to feed pigs.

Jesus' stories were indescribably interesting and thought-provoking. He never gave any teaching without such stories. But they were too often spoilt by some little unpatriotic twist like that.

## MONEY

THE Pharisees, like most of us Jews (I am afraid), are great lovers of money; and in spite of their much paraded reverence for the Holy Law it is a well-known fact that they will descend to almost any piece of underhand and tyrannical dealing in order to make financial profit.

Jesus, on the other hand, cared nothing at all for money. He frequently advised us to leave it out of our reckoning altogether, and to concentrate our thoughts on the service of the Kingdom of God; for if we were loyal to that Kingdom and to its King, all needful supplies would be given to us.

He also taught us, with great emphasis, that we could not serve both God and money.

On one occasion he told us a sarcastic story about Worldly Wisdom, which he personified in the shape of a dishonest steward, who showed the wisdom in question (on his dishonesty being discovered) by cheating his master and at the same time making his master's debtors his friends, through altering the accounts in their favour. He finished the story by saying, with the twinkle in his eye which we knew so well, that this sort of friendship, based on the wrong manipulation of money, would be likely to result in an eternal companionship. Somewhere, after death had separated us for ever from the money in question.

On another occasion he told us a terrible story about a rich man who was content to enjoy himself in luxury and ease while a poor beggar died at his gate. The rich man (although presumably a Jew) suffered



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torments of remorse in the after-life, torments which Jesus depicted in terms familiar to us from the graphic and terrible descriptions which the religious teachers of our country give of the sufferings endured by wicked foreigners after death, especially by those who have oppressed the Jews. He finished the story by telling us that it is only through undergoing a real change of mind, so that we shall be filled with God's love and pity, that those of us who have more money than others can hope to escape the rich man's fate.

As they listened to such teaching the Pharisees openly scoffed. Indeed, they seemed to object to Jesus' views about the right use of money almost more than they did to his religious opinions; for in spite of all their piety the Pharisees were practical men of business, and anything which touched their pockets came home to them very closely indeed. As I say, they derided his teaching about money.

When we heard this condemnation of wealthy selfishness, I fear that most of us disciples patted ourselves on the back, saying that we at least were blameless in that respect. We were inclined to fit the teaching especially to the tax-gatherers, most of whom were rolling in ill-gotten wealth, or to the rich Greek merchants and the luxurious Roman officials, who were becoming such a familiar sight in our country. When we thought of the fate which Jesus' teaching foreshadowed for these filthy traitors and aliens, we hugged ourselves with delight.

At any rate, whatever might happen in this world, the enemies of our country would writhe eternally in the next. As was the case with most of our fellow-countrymen, the main comfort which we got from religion in those days was the thought of Hell for the oppressor.

## “I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

THIS period of work in Peraea, to the east of the Jordan, went on for two or three months. The way in which it came to an end was remarkable.

Jesus suddenly told us one day that he must return to Jerusalem. We were thunderstruck. So short a time before he had barely escaped with his life from the capital, and now he was about to return! We expostulated vehemently, but in vain. He told us that his relatives at Bethany were in great trouble, on account of the illness and death of Lazarus, to whom Jesus himself was very much attached. At all costs he must go to help them.

We were very much upset by this decision, for it meant a needless risking, not only of the Prophet's life, but also of our own. However, Jesus was absolutely determined to go, whatever the danger might be; and finally Thomas, who in spite of his pessimistic nature had more pluck than the rest of us, persuaded us to go with him, to what we looked upon as certain death.

It was not a pleasant journey. The way is hot and steep and rough. There are robbers in abundance; and there was the prospect of very serious trouble at the end of the way. I dare say we were not very encouraging companions for the Prophet to have with him.

When we reached Bethany we found that crowds of people had come over from Jerusalem (which is only two miles away) for the mourning; Jesus' rela-

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tives, as you remember, were well-to-do folk. There was tremendous excitement, for a variety of reasons, when it was known that Jesus was approaching. Martha came rushing out of the village to meet him; but Mary, who was of a deeper and more thoughtful type of mind, remained for a time weeping at home.

I thought at first that Martha was going to assail Jesus with fierce reproaches for not having come in time to save the sick man; but any impulse of this kind was quelled at once by the Prophet's calm strength, and by the wonderful words which he spoke to her (words which mean so much more to me now than when I first heard them), "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believes in me, though he dies, shall live: and no one who lives and believes in me shall ever die."

The effect of those words on Martha was extraordinary. She at once declared her complete belief in Jesus' Messiah-hood and her entire trust in him.

Meanwhile Mary had also come to meet him, together with a number of the mourners. Her grief was so profound and so intensely touching, when she fell at his feet crying, "Had you been here, Lord, my brother would not have died", that Jesus was very deeply moved.

Then, in a surging crowd, we all went along to the tomb. Some of the people were frankly antagonistic; some were blaming Jesus for not having come sooner; some were sneering and sceptical; only a few really loved and trusted him. I know that already messengers had gone speeding off to the religious authorities telling them that now was their chance for the arrest.

As I think of the difference between that company which went to the tomb and the same company as, a

## "I AM THE RESURRECTION"

few minutes later, it returned from the tomb with Lazarus alive again (his sisters one on each side of him, almost wild with joy), and as I realize the stupendous thing which had happened, I am filled with shame; for I know that my own feelings were feelings not of joy or devotion or gratitude, but of satisfaction at the thought that now at last *everybody* must recognize that he was the Messiah. There would be no further possibility of doubt or denial. A vast wave of popular enthusiasm would sweep him, in spite of himself, into a declaration. And then for the Kingdom and the Glory! We had settled amongst ourselves that I was to be Minister of War in his first administration, because of my reputation as a Zealot.

I see now how foolish I was in entertaining these expectations. The miracle, far from producing belief in the authorities, merely goaded them to immediate action against Jesus. That very evening they held an extraordinary session of the Holy Council, and passed a resolution that by fair means or foul he must be made away with. And the reason these good patriots gave for their decision was the risk that if Jesus made any declaration against Rome, it might be bad for the Temple (by which they meant the source of their own prestige and income) and for the Jewish nation (by which they meant their own power of domineering over the nation under the ægis of Rome)!

This, of course, showed that the Pharisees, who were always supposed to be willing to put the good of the country before all personal considerations, had made a base alliance against the Prophet with the Sadducees, who had control of the Temple, and cared nothing for the country.

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And *this* was the response of the leaders of our nation to the indubitable revelation of the divine Messiah!

It was fortunate that the common people did not know what was being planned, for the popularity of Jesus after the miracle was immense. In consequence, the priests and Pharisees did not dare to strike as yet.

## THE TEN LEPERS

WHEN he heard about the meeting of the Holy Council, and the decision which had been reached regarding his death, Jesus yielded to our entreaties that he should again leave the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. He was evidently very anxious to attend the Passover Feast that year, and till that time was willing to keep himself away from the immediate stronghold of his enemies.

So we went first northwards, to a village called Ephraim, where we stayed for a few days (it stands on a high hill, with a splendid view over the valley of the Jordan). Then we went east, back again into Peraea, and Jesus took up his work once more in that district.

One day a very remarkable thing happened. It was on our journey from Ephraim into Peraea. Outside a certain village which we were approaching we saw ten miserable lepers waiting—of course at a respectful distance from the main road. As we came near they shouted in keen excitement to Jesus, clamouring for him to heal them.

He looked at them with deep compassion, and told them to go straight to the nearest priest to get a certificate of healing. For a moment they hesitated in amazement, evidently expecting something more—a touching or anointing. Then one of them (I could see from his tattered and filthy clothes that he was a Samaritan) started hobbling off at his best pace—which was not very fast, for he was fairly far gone in the disease—towards the nearest town where there

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was a priest. A moment later the other nine miserable scarecrows were hobbling after him.

As we watched, a mysterious change seemed to come over those poor wretches. Their painful shuffle was gradually transformed into an ordinary run. They flung away their filthy bandages. Their marred limbs changed. They began to leap with joy as they went, to shout and to sing. And so they gradually disappeared from our sight, over the crest of a low hill.

Jesus was standing looking after them, rather sadly, when suddenly a figure appeared once more over the hill and came running swiftly and lightly towards us. As it came nearer, we saw that it was the man who had first obeyed Jesus' word, and had led the others off towards the town. It was the Samaritan leper. As he came he was shouting aloud his praises to God. He ran up to Jesus, fell at his feet, and in a voice hoarse with joy and gratitude gave him thanks for the wonderful gift he had given.

Jesus received him gladly, though he was sorry that the nine Jewish lepers had not also come to give thanks for their healing.

It seemed, even to me—much as I hated those loathsome Samaritans—that there was something in this incident which bore out the sayings of Christ about the Jews rejecting him and the foreigners accepting him.

## THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

As soon as we reached the confines of Peraea the bitter animosity of the local Pharisees against Jesus rapidly made itself apparent once more. They were continually interrupting his discourses with offensive remarks or sly questions designed to entrap him. They were always plotting against him. Wherever we went we saw these Pharisees airing their piety, ostentatiously tithing their garden produce, strolling forth about the hour of prayer so that they might be surprised by it and have to perform their religious duties in a public place, discourteously claiming for themselves the chief seats in the synagogues and the most prominent places at all public or private festivities, harshly enforcing the dictates of the Holy Law (or rather of their own interpretation of the Law) upon poor people who could not afford the time or the money to keep it, and generally making themselves and their religion hateful in the eyes of sensible men; for everyone knew all the while that at heart these Pharisees were consumed by the greed of money, and were willing to go very far in extortion and oppression in order to obtain it.

I remember especially one day on which Jesus' work had been very seriously disturbed by the fault-findings of a specially acrimonious company of these odious Peraean Pharisees. Towards the end of the day Jesus told the people his famous story about the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer (they groaned at the word Pharisee, but they spat at the word tax-



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gatherer). The two men went up to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee inflated his chest, spread out his robes, and proceeded to congratulate God that He had made such a fine fellow as he himself was. He went through the list of his own virtues, his extra fastings, his tithing of every single item of produce, his purity, his uprightness, his freedom from the sin of extortion (he was especially proud of this). Finally, glancing round, he saw the tax-gatherer, and congratulated God that He had not made him like that.

But the tax-gatherer was the one whose prayer was heard that day, and gained the divine favour and forgiveness. For he bent his eyes on the ground in deep humility, and merely prayed that God would be merciful to him a sinner.

At the time, though I was not fond of the Peraean Pharisees, I felt it most unfortunate that the Prophet should make a traitorous tax-gatherer the hero of his story.

## THE CHILDREN

ONLY once or twice did we see Jesus really angry. I have told you of one occasion—when the Phárisees tried to prevent his healing a poor crippled man on the Sabbath day. I will tell you now of another occasion, when his anger was directed, not against the opponents of his work and message, but against us, his friends and helpers.

Now that I come to think the matter over, in the light of subsequent events, it seems to me most extraordinary that Jesus was not more frequently angry with us. We were continually misunderstanding him, thwarting his designs, trying to persuade him to follow our own way instead of the way which he knew to be right. We were often, I fear, actively disloyal to him. And we were stupid, narrow-minded, selfish, and cowardly, to what must have been a most exasperating degree. But in spite of all this his patience towards us was miraculous.

However, on the occasion about which I am going to tell you, he did reprove us sharply, and with real anger.

It was during those later days in Peraea. The crowds had been thronging round us all day long, and there had been various annoying and sinister incidents with Pharisees and other ill-wishers of the Prophet's work. As evening drew on, the crowds gradually dispersed, and we began to hope for a little rest. It had been an exceedingly tiring day (I hate that country down in the deep Jordan valley: I always feel tired out down there). Our tempers had suffered severely under the strain.

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Just as we were beginning to hope that we might soon persuade Jesus to come along into the village to get some food (or rather to give us the chance to get some food), there came a crowd of the village women out of the gate, with swarms of children, some in their arms, some running about. We knew well enough what it meant. They wanted the Teacher to touch them (you know our Jewish practice of getting children blessed by famous Rabbis). That meant hours and hours of tedious delay, for Jesus was extraordinarily fond of children; he would take each one on his knee, play with it, make it chuckle and laugh, and finally (after giving it a kiss and his blessing) hand it back to a mother who would be filled with joy and devotion.

We had seen it all happen a hundred times before. It would be wearisome beyond words, and also highly undignified and absurd—even degrading—for one about whom we still cherished the quite definite hope that before long he would declare himself as our country's divine Deliverer-King.

Peter and I held a hurried consultation. Jesus had not yet seen the approaching crowd of women. He was engaged in speaking earnestly to the few remaining members of the day's audience. We stole away from the group under the tree, where we had been working all day long, and hurrying quietly round behind, so as to keep out of our Master's sight, we managed to head off the crowd of women before Jesus could (as we thought) see them. We ordered them sternly to return at once to their homes, and not to trouble the Messiah with their children and their petitions, for he was tired, and had much more important work to do than

to waste his time, and ours, over them and their families.

I fear we may even have implied that this was Jesus' own bidding sent through us to them.

The women looked astonished and frightened, as well as very much disappointed. Some of the children began to cry. Jesus turned round, and took in at a glance what was happening.

Then it was that we saw him really indignant, and suffered a stinging and public rebuke. Afterwards he welcomed the children, and played with them and blessed them, saying that the Kingdom of God belongs to such as they, and that whoever will not accept it as a little child shall not enter it.

But what place would children or childlikeness have in the victorious triumph of the Messiah over Rome, which was what we and all other patriotic Jews understood by the Kingdom of God? There would be need of strong men there, with subtle minds, not of children and childlikeness!

I fear we disciples looked on with scarcely concealed sneers, as well as with yawns of boredom and weariness.

## THE RICH YOUNG RULER

I HAVE told you about the very unpractical and other-worldly attitude which Jesus took up with regard to money, and how much that attitude distressed several of us disciples, especially the business-men amongst us, like Judas.

One day a very painful incident occurred, which graphically illustrated the difficulties likely to arise out of this attitude of his regarding money.

We were travelling along a dusty road, down in that infernal valley of the Jordan. As is usual there, it was blisteringly hot, and the air seemed stagnant and suffocating beyond words. We were covered with dust and sweat, tired out, and in anything but an angelic temper. In fact, we were quarrelling about the same old subject—the good places in the coming Kingdom. Jesus was walking, as he generally did now, just out of earshot ahead.

Suddenly we saw a cavalcade coming to meet us. First a gaily dressed young fellow on a fine horse, evidently a rich man. Then four or five mules with tents and baggage and all manner of appurtenances. Then a whole crowd of servants, some on ponies, some walking.

When the rich man drew level with Jesus we suddenly saw him dismount from his fine horse, and, careless of his expensive clothes, fling himself down in the dusty road at the feet of the Prophet. In great surprise we hurried up, and heard him inquiring of Jesus the way to obtain eternal life.

Now, as we afterwards found out, this young man

(he was not more than twenty-five) came of a rich and noble family, and in consequence of his position in the community had been made chief of the synagogue in a neighbouring town, whither he was now returning after a visit to Jerusalem. He had heard about Jesus; and in spite of the abuse showered on the Prophet by all his associates, had been deeply impressed by what he had heard. He was now using the opportunity afforded him by this unexpected meeting in order to find out the Prophet's teaching on a problem which, in spite of his position of religious leadership, had for a long time been weighing on his mind.

He was a pleasant-looking young fellow, and I could see that Jesus was touched by his earnest inquiry. He looked down on him with love. Then, in answer to his question, he went through the chief commandments of the ancient Law, and asked if he had kept them. The young man answered, both with humility and earnestness, that he had kept them; and I have no doubt that what he said was true, for he had been well brought up and bore an excellent reputation with everyone whom we afterwards asked about him.

Jesus seemed impressed by his modesty and candour, and the rest of us were highly delighted, for we at once perceived what invaluable help an influential friend like this would be able to render to us and our cause. He would give us an air of respectability, which we sorely needed in view of our Leader's awkward familiarity with tax-gatherers and the like. Very probably he would be able to do much to disarm the opposition of the other religious leaders, not only in Peraea, but also in Jerusalem. His wealth would

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be of use to us all, for he was evidently a generously minded fellow. Moreover—and this was a consideration which weighed very heavily with us—he would no doubt exercise a steadying influence over the unpractical eccentricities of our Master, and would perhaps even be able to persuade him to make that patriotic declaration for which we all thirsted so eagerly.

Everything depended on the way in which Jesus responded to his enthusiastic devotion, which to the rest of us seemed so flattering and so hopeful.

What was our disgust, not to say our horror, when we heard Jesus tell this wealthy and promising inquirer that he must sell off the whole of his property, give the proceeds to the poor, and become a homeless wanderer like ourselves!

Of course the poor boy was dumfounded. He rose to his feet, and in acute disappointment moved off to his horse, mounted, and rode away. He was very rich, so how could he be expected to follow such unpractical advice?

One or two of us ventured to remonstrate with Jesus for his wanton flinging away of such a golden opportunity, and for his rebuffing (for this was what it amounted to) of such an influential recruit. But in reply he merely said to us sadly that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. Much comfort that was to us, as we thought of what that young man's money might have done for us!

## THREE VINEYARD-PARABLES

ONE thing which I frequently noticed about Jesus' method of teaching the crowds who came to hear him was his skill in using the ordinary matters of everyday life in order to explain deep spiritual truths.

At the time, I remember, the Pharisees used to deride him for talking about simple things like fields and flowers and housework; and I am afraid that even we disciples were often inclined to be scornful about it. I suppose we imagined that no teaching which we and the rest of the common people could understand could possibly be deep and spiritual—I know that was the type of thought amongst us. But Jesus did not seem to mind our ill-concealed sneers, or the gibes of the Pharisees. He went on teaching spiritual truths through the simplest illustrations taken from the everyday life of the people to whom he was talking. And now I know that this is one of the chief signs of his greatness. For all who heard him, even the most casual listeners, still remember his stories and (through these) his teachings.

For instance, you know how many people in our country are employed in the cultivation of grapes. Crowds of these people—and they are the simplest and roughest of the peasantry—came to hear Jesus; and I recall three very striking stories which he told to them about this time—that is, towards the end of his work in Peraea.

The first was about a man who needed extra labour for his vineyard at the time of the grape harvest. At various hours of the day he went out and hired addi-



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tional hands. At the end of the day he paid them all a full day's wage, both those who had been working all day and those who had only been engaged an hour or two before evening. This he did with open-handed generosity, caring little for what is generally thought of as the value of money.

The second was about a rich landowner who made a vineyard in an estate which he owned in a distant part of the country. As he could not oversee the work of the vineyard himself, he put agents in charge whom he thought would be trustworthy. But, seeing that he lived a long way off, the agents began to misappropriate the profits of the vineyard; and when he sent servants to claim his own, they beat them and killed them, just as the Jews in the past have beaten and killed the prophets whom God has sent to bid them render to Him—the Founder and Lord of our nation—the fruits of righteousness and love.

Finally, the landowner sent his own son, thinking that the wicked agents would respect him; but they said to each other that if they made away with him the inheritance would be their own; and so they mercilessly killed him, and were duly punished thereafter.

I am sure that as Jesus told us this story he was thinking of his own approaching fate; but at the time we considered that his reference to the disobedience of the Jewish nation was very offensive and uncalled-for.

The third story was about another landowner, who had two sons. One morning he asked them both to go and work in his vineyard. The elder willingly said that he would do so, and then as soon as his father's back was turned went off in the opposite direction

### THREE VINEYARD - PARABLES

and spent the day as he liked. The other at first refused to do what his father wanted, but later was sorry for his rudeness, and went and worked in the vineyard all day long.

This story also created a good deal of offence, for the Pharisees imagined that they themselves were meant by the disobedient son, and the rest of us thought that the whole Jewish nation was intended, so that we too were annoyed about it. It was a case of, "If the cap fits, put it on."

But however much offence may have been created, you may be quite certain that none of those who heard these stories ever forgot either the stories themselves or the lessons which they were meant to convey.

## JAMES AND JOHN

WHEN the time for the Passover Feast drew near, Jesus told us that he must go up to Jerusalem once more. We were struck with consternation when we heard it, for it seemed like thrusting ourselves into the very jaws of death. We knew that the Holy Council were resolved to kill him, if he should be unwise enough to put himself once more into their power. We knew that they had their agents out to give them early news of his approach. We knew also how cunning, how treacherous, and how powerful these rulers were, and that they would stick at nothing in order to achieve what they had determined.

Besides, we did not at all like the spirit in which Jesus was going up to the capital. He said no word about the great Declaration of Messiah-hood which we still ardently anticipated, nor about the coming victorious Insurrection. Instead, in a spirit of sombre defeatism, he told us that the priests and rulers were bound to get the better of him, and to hand him over to the Romans for execution (they will not even allow us to put our own criminals to death).

Since this was his state of mind, it seemed little short of suicide for us all to go up to Jerusalem just then; for how could *we* hope to escape if he were arrested and condemned? We tried most earnestly to dissuade him from going, but to no avail. In fact, he actually started off by himself, and left us behind, plunged in fear and dismay.

Finally, however, Peter had one of his sudden changes of mood, and told us that we were all fools

and cowards. Ten to one Jesus was only testing our loyalty by these gloomy prognostications. If we hung back now, where should we be when the great Declaration was made? Very probably he would make it as soon as he reached Jerusalem. The priests and rulers would be put to confusion, the Romans driven out, and the Kingdom set up; and we should not be there to claim the high dignity and office for which he had been training us!

These courageous words had an immediate effect upon our minds. All thoughts of discouragement and caution were cast to the winds. We hurried after Jesus, taking with us a crowd of other followers of the Prophet, who like ourselves had been overcome with doubt and dismay at his decision to return to the capital, but were now all on fire to be there in time.

That evening James and John played an infamous trick on the rest of us. They said afterwards that they did it only in order to get the Prophet to make up his mind regarding Messiah-hood and Insurrection; but you may guess for yourself whether or no we believed this excuse! They got their old mother, who was one of the company with us, to go with them to Jesus when he was out on the mountain-side praying, after our evening meal. She asked him to make her two sons the chief Ministers in the Kingdom as soon as he should establish it!

He answered her gently enough; but when the rest of us heard about it you may be sure we let them know quite plainly and directly what we thought of their trying to steal a march over their old comrades. This, then, was what John's special love for Jesus meant!

However, when Jesus heard our quarrelling, he

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came back from the mountain-side, and told us that our ambition must not be for positions of greatness, but for the opportunity of humble service. He himself had come as a servant of mankind, to give his life a ransom for many.

We heard him incredulously and impatiently, for we were hot with anger against James and John. As soon as he had returned to his prayer, we fell again to our quarrelling.

## BLIND BARTIMAEUS

I REMEMBER vividly every slightest detail of that final journey up to Jerusalem. It began as I told you, in doubt and dismay, with us disciples almost in revolt, allowing Jesus to start without us. Then came the sudden change in our feeling, and the beginning of a wild enthusiasm and an eager desire to be ready for the great Declaration, which we made sure would follow our arrival at the capital. As we went on, this enthusiasm increased. There were some of us who felt it to be needful to spread the fire of expectation as widely as possible, in order, as it were, to *force* an open Declaration from the Prophet. We had suffered such bitter experiences in the past from his unwillingness, in spite of golden opportunities, to commit himself to his divine calling as National Deliverer, that we held it to be necessary now to use the popular expectation as a lever to force him over the brink. Consequently we made it our business, in all the villages and towns through which we passed, to spread the idea that this time he was really and actually going up to declare himself as Messiah, and to inaugurate the National Resurrection through the expulsion of the Romans.

The news spread like wildfire, and huge crowds began to follow Jesus. Everyone was filled with uncontrollable excitement. People left their work, caught up rough weapons to be hidden under their clothes, and hurried after us, thinking nothing of the long and arduous ascent to Jerusalem, and of the need for

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food and lodging during an absence which might last no one knew how long.

Thus we came to Jericho, not a little company of a score or two, as we had set out, but an enormous multitude.

At the entrance to the town sat an old blind beggarman, well known for many years to everybody in that part of the country. Of all those crowds it was this old blind beggar who first gave public expression to the thought which was in the minds of us all, but which no one had yet dared to utter aloud (for the silence of Jesus seemed to awe even that great multitude). As the crowd surrounding the Prophet thronged past him, the old man sprang to his feet, and in his thin, piercing voice hailed him loudly as the Son of David, the Messiah.

It was a most dramatic moment. The crowd stopped with one accord; and some of the bystanders, who were probably not yet prepared for such a definite avowal (or perhaps they were Pharisees), told the old man roughly to hold his tongue. But again and again he called upon Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus asked him what it was that he wanted, and he said that he wanted to receive his sight.

Jesus was clearly pleased by the old man's spontaneous belief in his Messiah-hood. He did not refuse the title offered him, but seemed to accept it. He praised the man for his faith, and healed him. Thereupon a great cry of wonder and joy went up from the people, and they gave praise to God that at last He had sent the Deliverer. We all felt that the public avowal had at last been made, after a fashion; but in what different circumstances to the

## BLIND BARTIMAEUS

pomp which we had anticipated! No gorgeously clad heralds with golden trumpets, but only a blind old beggar!

Old Bartimaeus followed us into the city, glorifying God.



## ZACCHAEUS

NONE the less, as we entered Jericho our hopes were high. Jesus had publicly sanctioned the acclaiming of his Messiah-hood, in the episode of blind Bartimaeus. It now only remained for him to declare the Insurrection. Many of us believed that this might be done there and then, and that we might advance to Jerusalem, not a mob, but an army, conquering and to conquer.

But just when our hopes were highest they were dashed to the ground, and by the Prophet himself.

The narrow streets of the town were crowded to suffocation. As we moved slowly along, keeping as close to Jesus as we could, we heard murmurs of execration from the people around us, and saw them gazing up into the air. There was a big sycamore-tree at the side of the street just there, and up in its branches was a little man, looking very foolish, and very frightened too when he saw the people all staring up at him and heard their unfriendly remarks. We quickly gathered that he was the chief tax-gatherer of the place, a man named Zacchaeus, who bore an evil character with the people, not merely for his traitorous mode of life, but also for the exceptionally vigorous manner in which he profited by his opportunities for extortion.

The crowd seemed to stop of its own accord and gather round the tree. We heard the remark made that the stoning of so notorious a traitor would be an excellent method of inaugurating the Messiah's rule. Zacchaeus began to look more and more frightened.

Then Jesus spoke. Was he going to say something decisive at last against these odious sellers of their country's honour, with whom he had borne (and, alas! associated) too long? Was he going to come out on the right side at last? We stood eagerly attentive and hopeful, to hear what pronouncement he would make.

We could hardly believe our ears when he told Zacchaeus to come down quickly, because *he must stay at his house that day*. It seemed incredible. Here he was, the acknowledged Messiah, at the very outset of his triumphal progress towards his capital, proposing to demean himself and stultify his mission and disgrace his country and his friends by hobnobbing with one of these abandoned wretches, to whom their country's shame and the appalling sufferings of the poor were merely a chance of making sordid personal profit. For it was not so much the actual words in which Jesus made his proposal as the tone in which he made it—the tone (I blush to use the word) of *friendship*!

Of course we protested as strongly as we could, while the crowd gaped in dumfounded amazement and the Pharisees sneered in undisguised triumph. But our protests were of no avail. We showed him that he was deliberately turning his back on God's call, and sacrificing his heaven-sent opportunity of fulfilling God's will for his own afflicted people. We showed him that for one miserable sinful individual, who by his deliberate misconduct had forfeited all claim to be treated as a Jew or even as a man, he was casting away the opportunity of establishing God's universal Kingdom for ever. There in the narrow street, with the crowd (now rapidly growing hostile) pressing

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around us, we agonized with him in our entreaties. I seemed to see our dear, tormented country standing amongst us, a gracious grief-stricken figure, pleading with him reproachfully not to forget her desperate need.

But it was all useless. Jesus went off to the house of Zacchaeus, thereby utterly ruining all his influence in Jericho. That evening Zacchaeus made a great feast, and publicly renounced his sin; and I have heard since that he has kept his vow. Thereupon Jesus acclaimed him as a true Jew! And so forth. But what interest could we take in the regeneration of Zacchaeus? Our hearts were almost broken at the wanton futility of it all.

## THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

FROM Jericho we came up the long hill towards Jerusalem, and on reaching Bethany went to the house of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. As you may suppose, they welcomed us most warmly. It was strange to see the difference in Martha's behaviour. You remember how unpleasant she had been on the occasion of our first visit. Now she did all that she possibly could to make us feel at home.

On the next day after our arrival (Jesus had accepted their invitation to stay a day or two there before plunging into what was certain to be a very hard and very dangerous week's work during the Passover festival at Jerusalem) Lazarus and Martha arranged a great feast in honour of the Prophet. Almost the whole village was invited, and the large inner courtyard of their house was crowded with the guests.

In the middle of the feast a strange thing happened. Mary came silently forward from one of the side rooms, with a beautiful cruse of very sweet and very valuable perfume in her hands. This she poured over the head and feet of Jesus, as is our custom when we wish to show very especial honour to anyone.

Of course it was a graceful sign of the gratitude which the family felt for the wonderful boon which Jesus had conferred upon them in restoring Lazarus to life; but I must confess that to me personally (and I have reason to believe that the rest of the disciples felt the same) it seemed a most unjustifiable waste of money. That perfume was worth a sum which would represent half the yearly income of an average man.

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Of course Lazarus was well off, and could no doubt afford it. But still it seemed an almost indelicate display of his superior resources. Besides, it rather offended our sense of democratic independence and equality to see our Master—concerning the wisdom and good-citizenship of whose policy we had such grave doubts—receiving all these marks of devotional adulation.

Finally, Judas spoke up, and told Jesus roundly that it would have been much better if Lazarus and his sisters had chosen a more practical method of expressing their gratitude. They might have given the cash-value of the perfume to the poor, or better still, they might have paid it into the poor fund which our company kept up, and of which Judas was himself treasurer. At this the rest of us, and I fancy Jesus himself also, were a little amused; for we had had painful and somewhat obvious cause for the complaint that not everything that went into Judas' poor fund bag was duly made over to the poor, unless one could regard Judas himself as a legitimate object for charitable relief. I fear the man was thoroughly dishonest over money.

However, Jesus answered his suggestion—and the unspoken or merely whispered thoughts of the rest of us—gently enough. He courteously accepted the kindly gift of Lazarus and his sisters, adding one of those somewhat low-spirited allusions to his coming fate, to which we were by now becoming thoroughly accustomed. He approved of giving to the poor, but he said that we should have plenty of opportunities for such charity in the future, when he was no longer with us. At this Peter, of course, must needs try to

## THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

cheer Jesus up, in his usual bull-in-the-china-shop manner, and with his usual degree of success.

Mary, who had been considerably disheartened by Judas' remark, was greatly pleased by Jesus' kindly reception of her gift.

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

I now come to the last crowded week of Jesus' life on earth. Every detail of it is vividly impressed on my memory.

The week started with wonderful hopefulness and joy. For on the first day of the week Jesus entered Jerusalem as the divine Messiah.

You remember that he had been first publicly hailed as Messiah by blind Bartimaeus at Jericho, but that the wild outburst of enthusiasm which had been aroused by that recognition had been effectively damped down by his own extraordinary action in showing friendliness to Zacchaeus.

All the way up from Jericho to Bethany—that long, hot, arduous ascent—Jesus had walked resolutely ahead, with a little band of us disciples, discouraged and very cowardly, tailing off in the rear, ready, I am afraid, at the slightest sign of danger to desert our Master and flee for our lives.

But at Bethany things had begun to be very different, for there the memory of what had been done for Lazarus was still active and powerful. And the next day, when news reached Jerusalem that Jesus had come back, immense crowds came out to welcome him, for the whole of Jerusalem had been profoundly stirred by the raising of Lazarus. This popular enthusiasm forced the priests and rulers to hold their hands for the time being, but they watched narrowly every movement of the Prophet, in the hope of an opportunity of making away with him.

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

When we saw all this popular interest and devotion, our hopes revived once more, and we industriously spread amongst the crowds who had invaded Bethany the news of what had happened at Jericho—not, of course, the incident of Zacchaeus, but that of Bartimaeus and the public acclaiming of Jesus' Messiahhood.

The news spread like wildfire that now at last the Prophet was ready to declare himself; and the crowds prepared to bring him in triumph to his capital as the divine King. They tore off their outer garments, in the most rapturous enthusiasm, and spread them in the road before him. They cut down branches from the trees and spread them also in the road, or carried them in their hands and waved them aloft like banners. And as they went the whole multitude chanted aloud the greeting to the Messiah: "Hosanna! Rejoice for the King sent by God, for the Kingdom established by God, for freedom restored to the Jews, as in the times of our great King David." This was the fashion in which we entered Jerusalem that day.

It was wonderful to see those crowds, in the wild intoxication of their joy that at last the Messiah had come. They would have gone anywhere, done anything, for him. If he had spoken the word, there would not have been a Roman left in Jerusalem in two hours' time. Nothing could have stopped them. There were many of us urging him that now was the time, not merely for this public recognition as Messiah, but for the declaration of Insurrection, for the call to the Holy War.

But though he thus willingly allowed the people—at



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long last—to acclaim him as Messiah, Jesus would go no farther. He would not hear one word about the declaration of Insurrection, in spite of our clamours. So what was the use of his Messiah-hood?

It was another grievously wasted opportunity.

## THE MOURNING OVER JERUSALEM

THERE was one especially remarkable incident which occurred during that brief triumphal progress from Bethany to Jerusalem, on the first day of the Last Week.

There is a point on the road where, on turning the corner of a rock, part of the Holy City suddenly bursts upon one's view. When we reached this point, our procession seemed to halt of its own accord, and the cries of triumph broke forth with redoubled vehemence. It suddenly flashed across my mind that this would be a grand moment for that Proclamation of Liberty and Insurrection, for which we were all yearning. How dramatic it would be if Jesus, pointing to the beautiful city thus revealed to us, should there and then call upon the expectant multitude to free her from her chains and establish the Rule of God!

For a moment I half imagined that the Prophet was going to do some such thing. But only for a moment. He spoke, and in words of deep feeling; but they were words very far different from those which we desired.

For he began to mourn over the City, and to bewail the fact that her people were so foolish as not to know how best to secure peace for her and avert ruin from her. And he went on to utter dark words of mysterious foreboding regarding the fate which her enemies were soon to bring upon her—a fate which would be nothing less than complete destruction.

I must acknowledge that there was a ring of genuine

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love for the City in what Jesus said, and of genuine desire also for her true welfare, as well as of grief for the fact that she did not know how to secure that welfare. But what bitter words they were for us patriots to hear! What else could they mean but that he was counselling submission to the Romans, and a craven acquiescence in their rule, in order that we might avoid the vengeance which might follow revolt! This, at least, was all the meaning we could see in such utterances.

And this was he whom we were acclaiming as the Divine Liberator, he whom we expected to become the Leader of Insurrection!

Peter roughly asked Jesus to be silent; and the rest of us tried to drown what the Prophet was saying in a fresh outburst of ardent Hosannas.

Fortunately he had not spoken very loudly.

## THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

DURING the earlier part of that Passover Week Jesus spent the nights at the house of Lazarus in Bethany, going into the City every day in order to teach and preach amongst the crowds in the Temple.

The triumphal procession of the first day was not repeated, clearly because the God-given moment for decision had been let slip. Had Jesus seized that magnificent opportunity and declared for revolt, I have not the slightest doubt that the Roman yoke would have been broken and our country liberated once and for all. But he refused to speak the word; and after the procession reached the Temple, the enthusiasm gradually evaporated, and the people went off like lost sheep, many of them grievously disappointed.

So on the second day of the week there was no triumphal procession from Bethany to Jerusalem. We disciples felt the change, and a chill of coming disaster again began to creep over us.

On that day another somewhat untoward incident happened. Jesus did exactly as he had done on a certain occasion long ago, near the beginning of his work, when he drove the bankers and cattle-dealers and shopkeepers out of the Temple, on the ground that it was a desecration of God's House to allow their presence there. Of course they had thronged back again as soon as his back was turned on that occasion; and to-day there were more of them than ever, all shouting and quarrelling over their bargains, and cheating each other and fleecing the pilgrims, and

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having a merry time of it, right inside the Temple itself. As you realize, it was all a Vested Interest, protected from interference by the fact that the priests and the rulers generally (I mean the high-priestly party and the Sadducees) gained huge profits at Passover-time from the commissions and permits and so on which they exacted from all these traders.

Jesus, of course, cared nothing for Vested Interests, and he drove the whole crew of them forth from the Temple once more, greatly to the delight of the crowd, who hated the bankers and shopkeepers for the extortion which their privileged position enabled them to practise.

The incident led to another revival of Messianic enthusiasm, and the Temple was filled for a time with the cries of young lads and youths (you know what an exhilarating interest boys take in crowds, and crowd catch-words). They went up and down shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"—that is, "God save the Messiah!"

But this second cleansing of the Temple only intensified the hatred of the priests and Sadducees against Jesus. They might have forgiven him many things, but interference with their legitimate profits, never!

At the time they merely pretended to be scandalized at the fact that he did not restrain the boys of the crowd from hailing him as the Messiah. But deep in their hearts the resolution was immensely strengthened that somehow, by fair means or foul, he must be made away with, and the sooner the better.

For ourselves, we thought this deliberate flouting of the men in authority to be a mistake of strategy at that time, and to be calculated to imperil the chances of the

## THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Declaration of National Revolt, when it came. For everyone felt that somehow or other (and the task would be hard enough in any case) the priestly party must be carried with us, to sanctify, as it were, the coming war.

## THE TRIBUTE MONEY

I REMEMBER the third day of that Last Week chiefly on account of a series of conversations which took place in the Temple between Jesus and various deputations from the Jewish leaders, and for the teaching which arose from the questions asked by these deputations.

In the first place a company of chief priests and elders came to ask him (civilly enough, for they were afraid of the people) by what right or authority he had taken upon himself to purge the Temple of the traders on the previous day, and to teach and preach within its holy precincts, as they found him then doing. It was an ingenious question, because if he had claimed, as Messiah, especial authority from God Himself, they would have been able to use this as evidence in the charge of blasphemy which they were preparing against him.

However, Jesus replied by asking them whether they thought that John the Baptist's authority had been from God or not. And this they dared not answer one way or the other; for they themselves had refused to acknowledge the authority of John; and yet if they had said that John was a merely human teacher, the people would have fallen upon them in wrath, for the popular view was that John had been a great and divinely inspired prophet.

So the deputation of the chief priests retired speechless and discomfited.

Jesus followed up his victory with a very serious warning. He said there was great danger that the

unfaithfulness and greed and unspirituality of our religious leaders would lead to the Kingdom of God being taken away from the Jewish nation altogether, and given to the Gentiles. This was a terrible threat to make to crowds in the state of patriotic excitement in which the Passover crowds then were, and it reinforced the hatred which the leaders already felt for Jesus by a new and more deadly fear—that he would destroy their influence and prestige with the common people. However, they could do nothing there and then to stop his speaking thus, for fear of the popular interest in the Prophet.

It was only a few minutes afterwards, if I remember rightly, when Jesus told his audience, which by now was a great one, his story about the King's Wedding-Feast, to which one of the invited guests had the impudence to go without troubling to put on his best dress: in consequence whereof he was expelled with ignominy. This raised a laugh against the Pharisees, who certainly took the story to heart as being aimed at them; but I am not at all sure that Jesus did not mean to imply that our whole Jewish nation is in the position of the careless and insolent guest.

Shortly afterwards another deputation came up. This time the Pharisees had made an unnatural and impious alliance with the Herodians—the supporters of those odious, half-alien, half-pagan oppressors of their own country and toadies of Rome, the princes of the house of Herod. The only reason for the alliance (at all other points, of course, Pharisees and Herodians are poles asunder) was their joint hatred of Jesus; for the Herodians were opposed on principle to



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anyone who looked like becoming a leader in a movement of Jewish emancipation.

The question asked by this deputation was a very clever one. Ought we to pay the Roman taxes or not? Quite apart from any question of insurrection, were we or were we not justified in engaging in a campaign of passive resistance against the iniquitous extortion and oppression of Rome?

You can see how cunning this question was. The Prophet's enemies had staged their attempt to discredit him with great skill. The occasion was as public as it possibly could be. There were thousands of Passover pilgrims round him, many of them from our own Galilee. Most of them, I believe, had arms concealed under their outer garments. At the signal of revolt, had it been given, they would have been transformed in a moment into an armed mob, filled with a wild fanatical enthusiasm, thirsting to shed their blood for their country. With the leadership which Jesus could so well have given, they might have stormed the Tower of Antonia, where the Roman garrison had its quarters, massacred every Roman in the city, freed our sacred soil from their presence, and (I at least have no doubt of this) established throughout the world the Divine Empire of the Jews.

It was a moment of the most strained and tense excitement. I can see the scene still as we waited for the reply which Jesus would give—the beautiful colonnades behind; the white pigeons fluttering around the marble arches; the fierce faces of the Galilean peasants as they pressed eagerly in upon us; the triumphant scorn of the Pharisees, who saw that they

had caught Jesus at last (for if he declared for non-payment, they would betray him to the Romans; and if he did not, his popularity would be gone); the aristocratic detachment of the Herodian courtiers, as they gathered their robes closely around them to prevent their being soiled by the mob; the terrible anxiety on Peter's face, as he stood waiting for the answer close behind the Prophet; above all, the quiet power and dignity of the Prophet himself, though he must have known that the end was very near.

Again I found myself passionately praying to Jehovah that the committal might at last be made: that the opportunity might be seized and our country saved from her alien oppressors; that the Messiah might be worthy of his high calling.

But alas! another tragic disappointment was in store for us. When Jesus spoke, it was not to declare for non-payment of taxes—for resistance to oppression, in however mild a form—it was to lead his listeners off once more on what we could not but feel to be the false trail of religion: "Give to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and to God what belongs to God."

It was too heart-rending for words! Another reckless squandering of God-given opportunity! Another wanton sacrificing of patriotism to religion! Another turning away from his country's need on the part of the greatest leader our country had ever known!

The Pharisees and Herodians thanked Jesus for his answer with elaborate courtesy, triumph undisguised on their faces. The crowds, with murmurings of discontent, began to melt away. The opportunity had gone for ever. The enemy had been victorious. The

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Prophet had been publicly and effectively discredited. He had declined the Revolt. Nothing had been done for our distressed and down-trodden country.

We could scarcely bring ourselves to remain his companions any longer.

## THE CONDEMNATION OF THE JEWISH LEADERS

As I look back now, I can see that Jesus' attitude to that question of the Tribute Money decided his fate, for it meant the final sacrificing of his popularity, so that the rulers were able to proceed against him without fear of the people.

But they did not strike yet. They waited till the news of his Great Refusal in that instance should have permeated to all the pilgrims then in Jerusalem, so that there might be no risk of popular commotion, however trifling, when he was arrested.

It was astonishing how quickly the word was passed round amongst those pilgrims that Jesus was no good for our purpose. I was in close touch, of course, with the Galilean Zealots, of whom there were many thousands up at the Feast—hardy men, all prepared for instant action. There was not one of them who did not curse my Master to my face, after that decision about the Tribute Money, as a craven pietist, who would never do anything to help our country and to justify the hopes which he had aroused.

That occasion had been the decisive turning-point. Thenceforth Jesus' fate was sealed.

On the afternoon of that third day of the Last Week there came various other deputations to the Prophet. There was one, for instance, from the Sadducees (who, of course, have no belief in life after death), to ask him a frivolous question about a woman who married seven brothers, one after the other, according to the Law. Whose wife would she be in the other world?

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Jesus used the opportunity thus given in order to teach us that if we know and love God in this life, we are already possessed of everlasting companionship with Him—a companionship which death cannot touch, and which is in itself Eternal Life.

Then there was another question, asked by a young student of the Law (not a bad fellow at all), as to which was the greatest commandment in the Law.

Jesus told him that the whole Law is summed up in love to God and man.

There were a large number of other questions, to all of which Jesus returned answers so profound and so convincing that after a short time no one was bold enough to ask him any more. Besides, after the incident of that morning, interest in him and his sayings had very effectually subsided.

So for the rest of that afternoon he was chiefly teaching us disciples. I fear we were a miserable, discouraged, discontented, rebellious audience.

He told us with great emphasis to beware of the example of the Scribes and Pharisees; and he condemned very strongly to us their hypocrisy and pride, their insolence, their blindness, their narrowness of soul, their neglect of righteousness and justice combined with insistence on multifarious details of ceremonial observance. It is quite evident to me that this kind of sinfulness, especially in those who arrogate to themselves the title and prestige of religious leaders, seemed to Jesus to be the very worst of all forms of sin. As we knew from much bitter experience, his ideal for our country was a religious ideal (and perhaps it was an ideal not only for our country, but for other countries as well). He wanted us twelve to be leaders

## CONDEMNATION OF JEWISH LEADERS

in a religious movement, and so he was taking this opportunity of giving us the gravest possible warning against the kind of pitfall which awaits religious leaders.

But at the time we heard him with ill-will, for he seemed to us to be condemning wholesale the leaders of our country (and the only leaders she had) in spite of the fact that he himself had that very morning decisively refused to take up the responsibility of national leadership. After all, *they* were national leaders, however defective they might be in personal character; and *he*, however good he might be, was not even a national leader, although he had been given a unique opportunity of such leadership.

## THE WIDOW'S MITE

I REMEMBER another incident which occurred that same afternoon.

We had been wandering around the Temple after Jesus, as discontented, quarrelsome, and disloyal a group of men as you could wish to see—all our hopes cruelly dashed to the ground. Finally, we sat down opposite the thirteen trumpet-shaped vessels which are placed in the Temple courtyard for the reception of free-will offerings to the various Temple funds.

We began to watch the pilgrims making their offerings.

It was amusing to see the rich men stride pompously up, look carefully around to see that there were plenty of onlookers, and then ostentatiously throw in heavy pieces of money with a resounding crash.

We also noticed a poor widow, with two small children, who made the smallest offering which it is lawful to make—namely, two mites. Judas and one or two others began to sneer at the smallness of her gift; but Jesus stopped them at once, saying that the widow had given more than all the rich men together; for she had given all that she had, whilst they had merely given a small fraction of their surplus.

That was the day also on which some Greek converts to our Jewish religion came to have an interview with Jesus. Their coming, and their interest in his mission and work, seemed to awaken a strange response in his mind, and a great hopefulness—though of what I cannot imagine, unless it was of the Kingdom of the Jews which shall some day dominate all the Gentile

nations. But this hopefulness soon gave place to what we could only regard as evidence of acute and almost craven pessimism, for he began once more to foretell his suffering and death, and to say that only so could his task be fulfilled.

As we left the Temple that evening we tried to cheer his mind by showing him how splendid its buildings looked from the outside and from across the valley; but this only led to mournful foretellings of future destruction. One can well believe that the ruthless cruelty of Rome will some day lead to such a destruction; but seeing that he had that very day rejected the chance of expelling the Romans, we felt that the Prophet's prognostications of evil were somewhat ill-timed!

As we climbed the slopes of the Mount of Olives, I remember that some dark storm-clouds gathered over Jerusalem; and when we turned back, at the corner from which two days before we had gained our first sight of the City, the view in front of us was gloomy enough. How different also was the state of our minds! Two days before we had been filled with the joyful certainty of a speedy triumph. The declaration of Messiah-hood had at last been made. The declaration of Insurrection would surely follow at once. We were surrounded by cheering crowds, the centre of attraction to all eyes. Now we were alone. The enthusiasm had evaporated. The crowds had departed. The Insurrection had never been declared. We still lacked our dignities and high posts. The clouds of destruction were gathering over our motherland. And our Prophet would do nothing to save her!

Can you wonder that we were discouraged and disloyal?



At the well-known corner Jesus halted, and once more, in words of deepest grief and love, he uttered his mourning over the City. No one can say that he did not love his country. Sometimes I was almost tempted to believe that he loved her more than we did! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I fain have gathered your children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings! But you would not have it."

I confess that, angry and resentful as I was against Jesus, I felt that there was something inexpressibly moving about these words of his love spoken over Jerusalem.

## THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

It was on one of those earlier days in the Last Week that Jesus told us three more very vivid and striking stories.

First, there was the story of the ten bridesmaids, five of whom were shut out from the wedding-feast because they had brought no extra oil for their lamps.

Secondly, there was the story of the rich man going on a long journey. He gave large sums of money to his servants, with which to make profits for him during his absence. Two of the servants worked faithfully and well, but the third merely buried his talent in the ground.

These two stories seemed to be in line with those others which he had been telling us lately about the necessity for preparation and faithfulness of heart.

But the third was quite different, and exceedingly remarkable from various points of view.

It was told to us in response to our urgent requests that he would at once inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom, destroy our Gentile rulers, and miraculously establish himself as King and Judge over all nations, as Founder, that is, of a world-wide empire of the Jews.

In this story Jesus told us that when the Kingdom of the Messiah was established, the people of all nations (both Jews and Gentiles together) would be arraigned before the Messiah-King in his glory, and would be given joy in the Kingdom, or the reverse, not in accordance with their nationality (the Jews going to everlasting bliss and the Gentiles to ever-

lasting woe), nor even in accordance with their attitude to the Holy Law, but simply and solely in accordance with the kindliness and loving service which they had shown to the poor, the weak, and the distressed.

Moreover, he went on to identify with himself these outcasts and paupers, upon our attitude to whom our eternal destiny would depend: "I tell you truly, in so far as you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even to the least of them, you did it to me."

You will easily perceive how new—indeed how subversive and revolutionary—was the teaching thus given. Quite apart from the last portion of it (which at that time completely puzzled us), how were we to be expected to believe that the setting-up of the Messiah's Kingdom was to be a spiritual affair, determining not the future of God's peculiar people, but the eternal destiny of each one of us in the next world, and determining it, moreover, not in accordance with the needs and interests of our country, but in accordance with our individual character?

Above all, how were we to believe that, instead of the Gentiles being condemned wholesale to eternal suffering, Jews and Gentiles would be placed on a complete equality before the Messiah's throne? Such a conception was a sheer contradiction in terms; for the Messiah, by universal agreement, was to be a Jewish world-ruler, and was to rule the world in the interest of the Jews—that is, of God's chosen people.

No doubt the Prophet's conception of sinfulness as the absence of love, and of righteousness as the practice of love, was very noble, and a great relief after the

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insistence by the Pharisees on painstaking observance of every slightest detail in the ceremonial Law; but what patriotic Jew could for one moment think of accepting the teaching of the story as a whole? It was too flagrantly anti-national.

## JUDAS

By this time, as you may well believe, several of us disciples had begun to despair of ever getting Jesus to proclaim the Insurrection. We noticed with much alarm his waning popularity, and the fact that his acknowledgment of Messiah-hood had fallen completely flat, owing to his failure to follow it up with a call to action. We had various long conferences together as to any possible method by which Jesus might be dragged over the line, and compelled, whether he would or no, to give the signal for the revolt, through which alone the Kingdom we desired could be set up.

Judas was the keenest of us all at these conferences. The rest of us, indeed, rather chaffed him for his enthusiasm, saying that he had his eye on the post of Chief Finance Minister in the Kingdom, and that this was why he was so anxious to see the Kingdom set up!

Finally Judas resolved, as subsequently appeared, to steal a march upon the rest of us. He intended to accomplish what we all desired—that is, the definite and irrevocable commitment of Jesus to the leadership of revolt—and at the same time to line his own pockets.

He went off secretly to the leaders of the priestly party and asked them what they would give him if he arranged for Jesus to be handed over to them, under circumstances which would make any possible popular indignation ineffective for his rescue.

The priests, of course, jumped at the idea, and after a great deal of hard bargaining Judas received thirty shekels as the first instalment of the blood money.

Of course Judas fully believed (and all the rest of us would have supported him in the belief, had we been consulted) that once violent hands were laid upon him, the Prophet would throw off all disguise, abandon delay, blast his attackers with his divine power, and proceed at once to the destruction of the Romans and the setting-up of the Messianic Kingdom.

## THE LAST SUPPER

I do not remember anything especially noteworthy about the fourth day of that Last Week; but on the fifth day we arranged to have our Passover Meal together, in an upstairs room in Jerusalem. It was on that very evening that Judas' plot (as we afterwards found out) was to be put into execution; and as a matter of fact Judas left our meal in the middle, in order to make his final arrangements.

It was at that meal that Jesus performed a very strange action. We were too poor to afford the usual servant to carry round water and see to the comfort of us all before the meal. The landlord of the house had provided the usual towel and basin, and they were lying ready; but we had had a trifling quarrel as to who was to perform the menial act of carrying them round; and as we could not agree on the point they had remained unused.

However, soon after we had taken our places, and before the meal started, Jesus got up, took off his outer garment, lifted the basin and towel, and began to go round washing our feet. We watched him in some embarrassment, and Peter began to protest when it came to his turn; but Jesus at once silenced him by saying that if this were not performed for him, he could have no share in what was coming (by which we understood the founding of the Messianic Kingdom—I think we all at the time regarded this feet-washing as a strange secret sign of initiation to high office in the coming Kingdom, although Jesus

afterwards explained it to us as a practical example in humility and unselfish service).

After this we fell into one of our usual bouts of quarrelling regarding which of us was greatest, and which of us should have highest office in the Kingdom (there was a strained feeling of expectancy over us all, as though great events might begin to happen at any minute). Jesus told us once more, with sad insistency, that greatness in the Kingdom could come only by service; but that kind of greatness we should have indeed. What can he have meant?

He also gave Peter very solemn warning about loyalty and faithfulness, to which Peter responded with eager promises of devotion.

Then with mysterious words of consecration, which none of us could rightly comprehend, he distributed to us the bread and the wine of the Passover meal.

After the meal he gave us some very wonderful teaching about the spiritual life, answering our questions (which I fear were but foolish) with patience and kindliness, and promising that his presence should never leave us, whatever persecutions we might have to suffer. We were all a little awed, I remember; and our fierce ambitions and expectations were quiet for a time. We did not understand much of what he was saying, but we seemed to respond in some measure to his mood.

Finally, after he had prayed for us (and it was a deeply impressive prayer), we all went out together to a garden which we knew on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. By that time it was quite dark.



## GETHSEMANE

I NOW come to that terrible night of the arrest.

The name of the garden to which we had gone, after our Passover, was Gethsemane. As soon as we reached it, Jesus went forward into the shade of the trees to pray, taking with him Peter and James and John. The rest of us sat down near the gate, and after a little talk about the chances of the Kingdom being proclaimed that very night (by this time we had some suspicions as to why Judas had left us so suddenly an hour or two before), most of us went off to sleep, for it had been a busy and anxious week. I heard afterwards that the three specially privileged members of our company who had gone forward with Jesus (we were rather jealous of them for that) also took the opportunity for a short nap. Peter says that he woke up once or twice, and on one such occasion heard Jesus praying very earnestly that God's will might be done and not his own.

I fear we had not exactly taken to heart the constant warnings about faithfulness and preparedness which our Master had been giving us during the past few weeks. But we were rather tired.

About midnight we were suddenly awakened by the arrival in the garden of a motley company of Temple guards, led by Judas, and accompanied by a Roman officer and one or two leading priests. They had torches and sticks, and a few of them were armed with swords; but they did not seem at all an efficient or well-drilled body of men, and it was quite clear that they did not much relish the task which they had in

hand, for many of them had actually seen evidence of the marvellous power possessed by Jesus.

They advanced hesitatingly into the garden, while we sat up rubbing our eyes. Slowly it dawned upon us that this was the crisis of everything. Would Jesus respond to this definite attempt at violent arrest and destruction (for we knew that the priests intended his destruction) by at last putting his hand to the plough and proclaiming in heavenly power the Messianic revolt? Or would he let himself unresistingly be done to death and so for ever turn his back in tame surrender upon God's call to the defence of our downtrodden country?

Peter, who was evidently still very sleepy, seemed to have some confused idea that he would force the Prophet's hand, for he fetched a sword out from underneath his cloak, and with a somewhat quavering war-cry made a valorous attack upon the intruders! He evidently imagined that Jesus would be shamed into action by this. At the same moment I caught sight of Judas' face, full of the most eager expectation—no doubt he thought that the moment had arrived when his plan for committing Jesus to the revolt was bound to succeed.

But someone knocked up Peter's arm, so that he merely gave one of the Temple guards a slight wound; and the only response which Jesus made to the call for action was to heal the wound in question. Indeed, he gave us peremptory orders to attempt no armed resistance, saying that, if he wished, he could utilize in his defence infinite heavenly powers (and we all knew quite well that this was true), but that this was not God's will and way for him.

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The men who had come for the arrest were a cowardly lot. They were in deadly terror of the Prophet's supernatural powers, so much so that more than once they recoiled from him in horror, and actually fell to the ground when he surrendered himself into their hands.

But I fear that we disciples were still more cowardly; for when we saw that he would not resist, and that the revolt was not thus to be brought about, we were filled with panic, and fled in terror, pell-mell, every one of us, even from the ridiculous and terror-stricken band of his captors.

So Jesus was led away unresisting.

## THE TRIAL BEFORE THE PRIESTS

PETER and John recovered a little courage sooner than the rest of us, and set off to follow the Prophet and his captors. These took him first to the palace of Annas, who had been High Priest himself some years before, and had five sons who were all in turn High Priest. At that time the office was held by his son-in-law Caiaphas (the thing was a purely family affair). Peter and John gained admittance to the palace, and saw what happened both there and at the palace of Caiaphas, to which Jesus was afterwards sent.

Although it was in the dead middle of the night, a number of the chief priests were ready; for the arrest had been planned at night so as to avoid popular excitement; and they wished to get the trial through as swiftly as possible for the same reason. They held a kind of perfunctory investigation at both the high priestly palaces, and had ready a number of very shaky witnesses, who, on being confronted with the Prophet and remembering the evidences they had seen of his supernatural power, promptly forgot all that they had been carefully instructed to say, and began to contradict each other, and themselves, with great fluency.

Finally Caiaphas, despairing of getting any adequate evidence against his prisoner, asked Jesus outright whether or no he were the Messiah, whereupon (hugely to the High Priest's delight) Jesus declared openly that he was, but at the same time interpreted the title in

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such a way as to signify a spiritual and heavenly Messiah-hood, rather than a political and earthly, such as we desired.

Thereupon, of course, Caiaphas accused him of blasphemy. The assembled priests decided that he was worthy of death for the blasphemy, and they began there and then to beat and insult him. They blindfolded him, and then coming up to him one by one and giving him blows in the face, they said to him, "Use your prophetic power, Messiah, to tell us who has just struck you."

Peter told us afterwards that he looked on horrified at all this from the outer courtyard, longing to rush in and save Jesus, or at least to die by his side. As a matter of fact, however, we found out from John that Peter was really employed in trying to save his own skin by swearing to all and sundry that he knew nothing of Jesus, and had never seen him before; for Peter's strong north-country accent had aroused some suspicion among the servants of the palace that he might be one of the Prophet's followers. Finally, Jesus turned and looked reproachfully at Peter, whereupon, instead of going boldly in and taking his stand by his Master's side, to suffer with him whatever might befall, Peter slunk out of the palace, shedding ineffectual tears of remorse. He was a queer fellow was Peter.

However, I have not much right to blame Peter; for I myself had not the pluck even to follow the Master from a distance, in spite of my reputation for Zealot hardihood.

After this farcical preliminary examination was over, they took Jesus off to the Sanhedrin—the Holy Council

—of which a special session had been called at that unearthly hour, again for fear of the people.

There was still a faint glimmer of hope that Jesus might seize this last opportunity of declaring for the patriotic cause, of proclaiming himself a true Messiah, and of blasting his enemies with his supernatural power. But no; when they asked him point-black whether or no he were the Messiah, although he acknowledged that he was, he again qualified the term by a spiritual and heavenly interpretation. It was thus made absolutely plain that he could never be of any use to us as patriotic Jews, since he was merely claiming the supernatural status of the Messiah without his political and national responsibilities!

I believe that if Jesus had followed up these other-worldly claims, even then, by a stirring call to a Holy War against Rome, the better nature of those priests and leaders would have got the mastery. They would have flung caution to the winds and followed him. The opportunity was extraordinarily favourable for the revolt. There were many thousands of Galilean Zealots in the City, magnificent fighting material, if well led. And everyone, even his bitterest enemies, acknowledged Jesus' powers of leadership.

But the opportunity was lost!

What could they do, in view of these supernatural claims, unaccompanied by any willingness to strike for the motherland? They saw that Jesus had become a danger rather than a help to the national cause; and so they condemned him to death and sent him forward to Pilate, accusing him of the very thing which the nation had in reality condemned him for not undertaking—the leadership of an Insurrection.

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The disappointment and chagrin were too much for Judas. He went off and hanged himself. Poor fellow, he had his good points; but the affair of the thirty shekels certainly looked unpleasant, though the patriotic motive which prompted it was unexceptionable.

## THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

By this time we who had been the Prophet's disciples had recovered our courage to some extent, and most of us were there in the crowd which swept through the streets, conducting Jesus to his final trial before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. It was broad daylight by now, and half the pilgrims in the City seemed to have found out what was on foot, and to have rushed together to form that seething mob. But it was extraordinary how their feeling had changed. A few days ago they had been rapturously acclaiming Jesus as the National Deliverer, and conducting him in a triumphal procession, with royal magnificence, into his capital city.

Now he was the butt of universal execration. Anyone who could get near him spat upon him, or tried to strike him; and the Temple guards were by no means vigilant in warding off these blows and insults.

Everyone seemed to have heard the news that Jesus had refused at the eleventh hour to lead the Insurrection; and everyone agreed with clamorous detestation that our country had no use for a Messiah like that, for a teacher who would, not lead, however exalted his spiritual authority might be.

So they hustled him along to the castle of Antonia, where Pilate had his residence and heard his cases, safely protected by the swords of the Roman garrison. The luxurious pagan was not yet up, and kept us waiting for a long time. Of course the priests would not go inside the castle, for fear of defilement, so we all waited outside in the open courtyard. After nearly an



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hour Pilate came out on to the head of the steps leading up to the main gateway. He sat down on a sort of minor throne, which his servants placed for him there. I had never seen him before. He was a large fat man, with a sly look on his face.

He asked the leaders of the priests what they wanted. They said they had come to bring a capital charge against this prisoner (pointing to Jesus). "What charge?" asked Pilate. At this the priests took offence, thinking that the Governor meant to interfere with their administration of justice, so they merely replied that Jesus was a notorious criminal, to which Pilate gave a contemptuous reply.

After some rather petulant wrangling (Pilate seemed to have little idea of personal dignity, they say he is the son of a slave) the priests were persuaded to formulate their charges, since otherwise they could not attain their ends. They accused Jesus accordingly of spreading seditious doctrines, of forbidding Jews to pay the Roman taxes, and of setting himself up as a leader of insurrection.

Three more scandalously unjust charges I have never heard, and there were murmurs of indignation even from that crowd against the priests when they were made known. Jesus was formally and deliberately accused of doing exactly the three things which he had steadfastly refused to do, but which every loyal Jew longed for him to do. I fancy there was an element of grim humour in the priests framing their charges in this fashion; but if so Pilate gave as good as he got, as you will see. It is my belief that he saw through the whole affair from the very beginning, and understood just how much genuine concern for the

stability of Roman rule there was behind the priestly charges.

Pilate seemed impressed by the Prophet's bearing, and took him into the castle, where (as I heard afterwards) he questioned him closely as to the nature of the movement which he had wished to lead. Jesus told him that it was a spiritual movement, and had no connection at all with politics or insurrection. His Kingdom could never be founded by military force, for it was a Kingdom over the hearts of men. At this Pilate, who professed complete indifference and scepticism as regards religion, fetched Jesus out again to the people, and said that in his opinion he was innocent. In the meantime, however, the priests and leaders had been diligently going about amongst the mob, stirring them up to violent resentment against the Prophet as one who had preferred peace to national honour—as a leader who had cravenly refused to face danger for his country.

Consequently the Governor's decision was greeted with angry cries of rage and defiance, cries which obviously unnerved the flabby debauchee (he had had unpleasant experiences before of what Jewish opposition could do in the way of getting him into trouble with the Emperor). So, happening to hear from the cries that Jesus was a Galilean, he tried to shuffle out of his responsibility in the matter by sending the prisoner off to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee.

## THE CONDEMNATION

So Jesus was haled off once more, and dragged through the streets to the palace of Herod Antipas, who had come up from Galilee for the Passover (a lot *he* cared for the Passover!).

The "trial" before Herod was another disgraceful farce. The prince had for long been anxious to see and talk to Jesus, about whose wonderful powers he had heard much. Consequently he was greatly gratified that Pilate had recognized his jurisdiction, and sent the prisoner along to him. However, Jesus, who by now was very much exhausted, made no reply either to Herod's clumsy jests or to his insolent questionings and importunate demands for a miracle. Meanwhile the chief priests stood by his side and made all kinds of extravagant and disgraceful accusations against him.

Finally Herod grew tired of the prisoner's silence and ordered his miserable soldiery to bait him. They put an old royal robe on him, to deride his claim to Messiah-hood, and after various insults and cruelties dragged him back to Pilate.

The Governor was by no means glad to see Jesus back again, for he had hoped that Herod would relieve him of the responsibility of coming to a decision in the case, and so would save him from the risk of offending either the people or his own sense of justice, such as it was. However, he came out to the top of the steps once more, and made a short speech to the crowd, saying that neither he himself nor Herod could find that the prisoner had done anything deserving

death. Therefore he would scourge him (you know what a Roman scourging is like, strong men often die under it), and let him go. This, of course, was a weak attempt at compromise, and was anything but agreeable to the leaders and the mob.

You remember that Galilean Zealot Barabbas, who had been captured a month or two before, after a dangerous riot, which had looked for a time like developing into a regular insurrection? He had been condemned to death, and was awaiting execution. Now there was a custom that the Governor should give a pardon to some prisoner at the time of the Passover; and Pilate evidently bethought himself at that moment of this custom, as a possible means of escape from the difficulty which he was in. So he asked the crowd whether he should release Barabbas or "Jesus the Messiah" (as he called him).

Now since Barabbas had been imprisoned, some further details had come to light concerning his past career, and they were not very creditable to him. As a matter of fact, he was proved to have been a brigand in the hill-country round the foot of Hermon, and to have committed a number of serious crimes in the exercise of that calling. No one is fond of brigands, even though they may subsequently develop into patriotic insurrectionaries; and of course upholders of Law and Order and Righteousness like the chief priests and Pharisees would be the last people one would suspect of affection for robbers. Pilate probably reckoned, therefore, that the priests would solve his dilemma for him, by getting the people to shout for the release of Jesus rather than of Barabbas.

But he did not know how deep was the priestly

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hatred for our Master, nor how much they dreaded the reforms with which his influence threatened their misused power and prestige. Flinging to the winds all shame and all consistency, and even all respect for the Law, they went about amongst the people urging them to claim the release of Barabbas. The people, of course, were nothing loath. Although he might be a brigand, Barabbas was a man of his hands, a sturdy fellow who was not afraid to fight for his country—indeed, he was popularly supposed to have killed six Roman soldiers with his own right arm in the riot which had led to his arrest. There were no high spiritual ideals about *him* to make him reject golden opportunities for revolt.

So the crowd clamoured for the release of Barabbas and the death of Jesus. Moreover, though they were a Jewish crowd, they clamoured for his death by crucifixion—the cruel and impious method used by the Romans for executing slaves. Indeed, I think the mob had gone mad with hatred against the leader who, as they believed, had betrayed them and their country.

Even Pilate, hard-hearted and conscienceless though he might be, was appalled by the people's ferocity, and again tried to save Jesus by offering merely to scourge him. But the crowd went on clamouring for his crucifixion, and by this time Pilate had abdicated his authority by his indecision. Again protesting that Jesus was innocent, he called for water, and publicly washed his hands before us as a sign that he was free from the prisoner's blood, and that the responsibility for his death rested on the Jews. When they saw him doing this, both priests and people were highly de-

lighted, for they knew that it meant they would get their way. They cried out in jubilation, "We accept the responsibility for his blood. Let it be on us and on our children." When I think of that cry, I sometimes tremble for the future of our Jewish race.

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to his fierce soldiers, to be scourged before his crucifixion. I heard afterwards that scores of them gathered round him in the inner courtyard of the castle after the scourging was over (how he survived that scourging I cannot imagine, for he was already utterly exhausted). They dressed him in the same old royal robe, made a crown of thorns, which they pressed savagely down upon his head, and came and did mock reverence before him as a king. Each man, as he rose from doing reverence, gave him some cruel insult—spitting in his face or striking him across the mouth.

## THE CRUCIFIXION

It almost seemed as though Jesus had begun to exercise some extraordinary sort of influence over this pagan Governor, for after the scourging and the insulting by the soldiers were over, Pilate again tried to save him. He brought Jesus out to the top of the steps once more, tottering, bleeding, and wearing the old royal robe and the crown of thorns. With a touch of sullen anger Pilate showed him to the priests, saying, "There is your man: is not that enough?" But their malice was merely kindled to a hotter rage by the sight of the Prophet's sufferings, and again they stirred the people to clamour for his crucifixion. One of them also stepped forward and told Pilate that the charge against the prisoner was not merely political, but religious also—he had arrogated to himself a supernatural mission and authority.

When he heard this, the Governor seemed even more troubled in his mind than before (you know how superstitious these sceptical Romans often are—they have no faith in God, and so they grovel in slavish credulity before witches and magicians). He took Jesus into the castle once more, and questioned him closely about his mission and his claims. However, Jesus would not answer him, except to say, when Pilate started boasting of his power over him, that his future was in the hands of God and not of the Governor.

Then Pilate came out alone, and again suggested that Jesus should be released. At this the mob and the priests reached the lowest depths of degradation, for they began shouting, "If you release him, you are

a traitor to the Emperor, for anyone who claims to be Messiah is an enemy to Rome." They, the patriots, who were clamouring for Jesus' death because he was not patriotic enough for them, sought to gain their desire by accusing him of patriotic leadership, and by protesting loyalty to the national foe, the blood-thirsty foreign domination!

Pilate heard their words with a sneer of contempt. But I suppose he did not wish to risk another complaint by the Jews against him to the Emperor, so he had Jesus brought out once more, still in the same robe and crown of thorns. In bitter irony he presented the Prophet to them, saying, "See, here is your Messiah." This merely led to fresh shouts for his crucifixion. Pilate then asked them: "What? Shall I crucify your Messiah, your heaven-sent King?" But their reply to his sullen sarcasm was, "We have no Messiah, no king, except the Emperor."

As I heard those lying and traitorous words from priests and people I seemed to see our race deliberately rejecting its own glorious heritage, and condemning itself to destruction. All our patriotism seemed to have turned its energy, suicidally, against our own true national life.

They took him off to crucify him. He was already so weak and exhausted after the scourging that he could not carry his own cross, as the custom is. There were two other men taken with him to crucifixion: they were brigands, like Barabbas. Several of us disciples and a number of women followed him, weeping.

At the place of crucifixion we tried to give him some drugged drink to deaden the pain, but he would not take it.



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Pilate had given orders that a notice should be placed above his cross, "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." It was intended to be a bitter and insulting jest against our national life, and so it was regarded by the priests and rulers (though they had little cause for complaint after their final accusation against Jesus). They protested to the Governor about the notice, but he would not alter it.

To those of us who had loved and followed Jesus, and who had believed up to the very end that he would prove himself the Messiah, it was inexpressibly painful, not only to see his agony, but to feel in his obscure and unresisted fate the downfall and final terminus of all our hopes for our nation and for ourselves. It was a shameful end to the national ambition for the Messiah.

Rome had conquered—but that was not the worst. Rome had conquered through an explicit denial on the part of our national leaders of our most treasured national hopes. Worse even than that—Rome had conquered because he who might have saved our country had deliberately refused to save her.

## THE DYING THIEF

As we stood, a grief-stricken and dejected band, near the foot of the Cross, watching our Master's dying agony, there came groups of priests and Pharisees, and even Zealots and other pilgrims also, to scoff at him.

They said to him, "If you are the heaven-sent Messiah, as you claim, come down from the Cross." The soldiers also mocked at him, saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, order your subjects to release you." I remember one of the chief priests taunting him thus: "We have heard much of your wonderful miracles. Perform one now on your own behalf. If you saved others, cannot you save yourself?" Another said, "You boasted much about your Divine Mission, and your trust in God, and your special relationship towards Him. Then why does He not come to save you now?"

I have told you that two criminals were crucified with Jesus. One of them scoffed at him and cursed him, even there in his pain, telling him, if he was the Messiah, to save himself and them. But the other man seemed to have a strange dying vision, and he spoke as though this was not the end, dismal and complete failure though it seemed. For he said, "Jesus, remember me when you set up your Kingdom." I suppose he had seen some of the wonderful deeds of the Prophet, and had heard his teaching about the Kingdom, and so supposed that even now at the very last hour he might be intending to perform some dramatic miracle, to descend from the Cross, to punish the Romans and all his enemies, and to establish his

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Kingdom. The robber's words roused a flicker of hope in our hearts, especially as just then one of the earthquakes which are so common around Jerusalem began to make the solid ground beneath our feet sway and tremble, whilst a huge black sandstorm from the desert suddenly covered us with its almost impenetrable darkness. Might not these things be signs of the coming miracle?

But Jesus gave the dying thief no hope of the miraculous coming of the Kingdom which he desired. He merely told him that they would meet that very night in Paradise, the abode of the happy dead.

One thing I have forgotten to tell you. As the soldiers were nailing him to the Cross, and lifting it up, so that the weight came upon his wounded hands and feet, Jesus was praying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

At the very end (he did not last long upon the Cross, because he was already so exhausted) we heard him cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

As we went away, after he was dead and we had buried him in a tomb near by, we all echoed that dying cry of his. It seemed that God had deserted not only Jesus, not only ourselves, not only His own chosen nation, but His whole work and purpose in the world.

## EMMAUS

I now come to the most astounding part of my whole story.

Two days after the terrible downfall of all our hopes in the crucifixion of our Master, the eleven of us (Judas was already dead) had gathered at the place in which we had taken our Passover Meal with Jesus three days before. With us were others of his followers, and we were all in a state of uncontrollable excitement; not unmixed with fear. For since early dawn on that first day of the week there had been extraordinary rumours going about amongst us to the effect that Jesus was not dead at all!

Early that morning Peter had met him near the tomb, whither he and John had run after hearing from some of the women (who had gone there to embalm his body) that the tomb was empty. Even earlier than that Mary Magdalene had seen him face to face, and he had spoken to her. There were other reports too.

As we were excitedly talking these things over, there came a loud knocking on the outer door (which we had fastened in case the rulers tried to disturb us), and Cleopas and a friend of his were admitted, who told us that Jesus had walked and talked with them all that afternoon, as they were going to Emmaus, and had sat down to the evening meal with them there. We eagerly inquired of them what Jesus had said to them; and they told us that, thinking he must be a stranger in Jerusalem (for at first they could not recognize him), they had told him freely all about the terrible frustration of our hopes for national

Liberty and national Resurrection, in the recent crucifixion of our Master. But then, in the most marvellous fashion, he had shown to them, by his interpretation of our ancient Scriptures, that it is God's plan to save His people (and not in one nation only) by suffering love instead of by force and destruction.

We listened to what Cleopas was saying with the most strained attention, and yet with a good deal of incredulity. How could God ever give freedom and universal rule to His people except by force—except by a tremendous manifestation of supernatural power? How could suffering love drive out the Romans and give us our Kingdom of the Jews, which so many prophets and seers had promised to us, and for which so many good men and true had already laid down their lives?

And then—just as we were talking of these things—Jesus himself stood in the midst of us!

How he came in, with the doors fast bolted, I cannot imagine. But there he most certainly was; and he gave us his solemn blessing of peace.

He did not stay long; and when we could no longer see him we broke forth into a tempest of excited and wondering discussion. For myself, I seemed in a flash to see the marvellous significance of it all. With a Leader who had risen from the dead, what might not our movement achieve? Everyone knew that he had been crucified. Half Jerusalem had seen him dying or dead, and had scoffed at him as he hung there. As he had half hinted to us from time to time (how thick-headed we had been), the divine power in him, which we had seen conquer death in others, had

conquered death in his own case also. Of course it had! What else could possibly have happened? Why had we been so despondent and so weak in faith? All was not lost. On the contrary, we were on the threshold of stupendous victory, followers of a Leader whom death could not touch. The Resurrection of Jesus would be the prelude to a vastly greater thing—the Resurrection of our country.

As I thought of these things, and as I spoke of them to my friends, my heart burned within me. I was inspired. They listened to me spellbound. He had merely been testing our faith—but what a long, hard test! Next time he appeared to us, beyond all doubt, he would declare the Kingdom. There would be no need of force and slaughter, with an immortal Captain like that. The Romans would yield without striking a blow. In a moment the Messianic Kingdom would be a fact—all the world over. And we? In modesty and awe I refrained from reminding them of what *we* should be!

## THE FINAL COMMISSION

WE saw Jesus on a number of occasions after that. Indeed, we became quite used to the thought that he was still living and working in the world, though his companionship with us was different from what it had been. He would appear amongst us suddenly, especially when we were praying together, or discussing the chances of the Kingdom. He would give us deep spiritual teaching, and an extraordinary comfort and strength. But somehow, for forty days, we never dared to put the question to him which on that first night we had decided, by my advice, to put next time we saw him—I mean the question about the declaration of the Kingdom.

However, forty days after the Passover we were all gathered in the open air, on the Mount of Olives, talking on that one eternal subject—what other subject, indeed, did patriotic Jews ever discuss? Suddenly he himself stood amongst us; I cannot hope to describe to you the love and grace and power of his presence. Screwing up my courage, at last I blurted out the long-intended question, on which so much depended: "Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore to our country Freedom and Self-rule, to give her the Dominion over the whole world, to found the divine Messianic Kingdom?"

Once I had asked the question I felt better; and I went on to point out to him, in eager words, and with (I believe) a genuine fire of patriotic faith, the magnificent opportunity which his Resurrection had provided for bringing about an even more wonderful

and divine thing—the Resurrection of our tormented country. As I spoke and pleaded with him, I saw the infinite pathos of our national fate, the appalling wickedness of our oppressors, the immense issues involved for the spreading of God's righteousness through the earth. They told me afterwards that I spoke with marvellous power.

But alas, alas! It had no effect. My enthusiasm, my patriotic zeal, my longing for God's blessing on His people (and through them on all the nations of the world, whom they might govern righteously), were all utterly wasted.

He heard me patiently, and rather sadly, and he gave us but cold comfort. All he said was: "Do not be anxious to know too exactly the time when the Kingdom will come. Your task is to be my witnesses, not in this land only, but in all the world. And I will never leave you. I am with you to the end."

And so he left us.

But when, oh when will the Kingdom come? When, oh when shall our country be delivered?

Will it be this year, or next year, or in ten years' time. Surely not so long as that!

We know he will come again, the Messiah of the Kingdom of the Jews, clad in all heavenly power. But when, oh when will it be?



## PENTECOST

EVERYTHING is changed.

What has happened, or how it has happened, I cannot exactly tell you. But all my ideas are completely altered. My whole mind is utterly different from what it was yesterday, when those last words were written.

I see now what a blind fool I have been all these years, and how shamefully I have wasted matchless opportunities of companionship with Him.

I see now, and for the first time in my life, beyond my country, beyond my love for my country, to His country, the whole earth, God's universal Empire—the one true Kingdom, the Kingdom of world-wide love and brotherhood.

I see now why He would not fight, why He would not lead the Revolt, why He said that the Kingdom could only come through the winning power of divine, all-suffering Love, why He refused to become the kind of Messiah we wanted Him to be.

I see now why He died; and I begin to see what His death has done—what a difference it has made—for me and for all mankind.

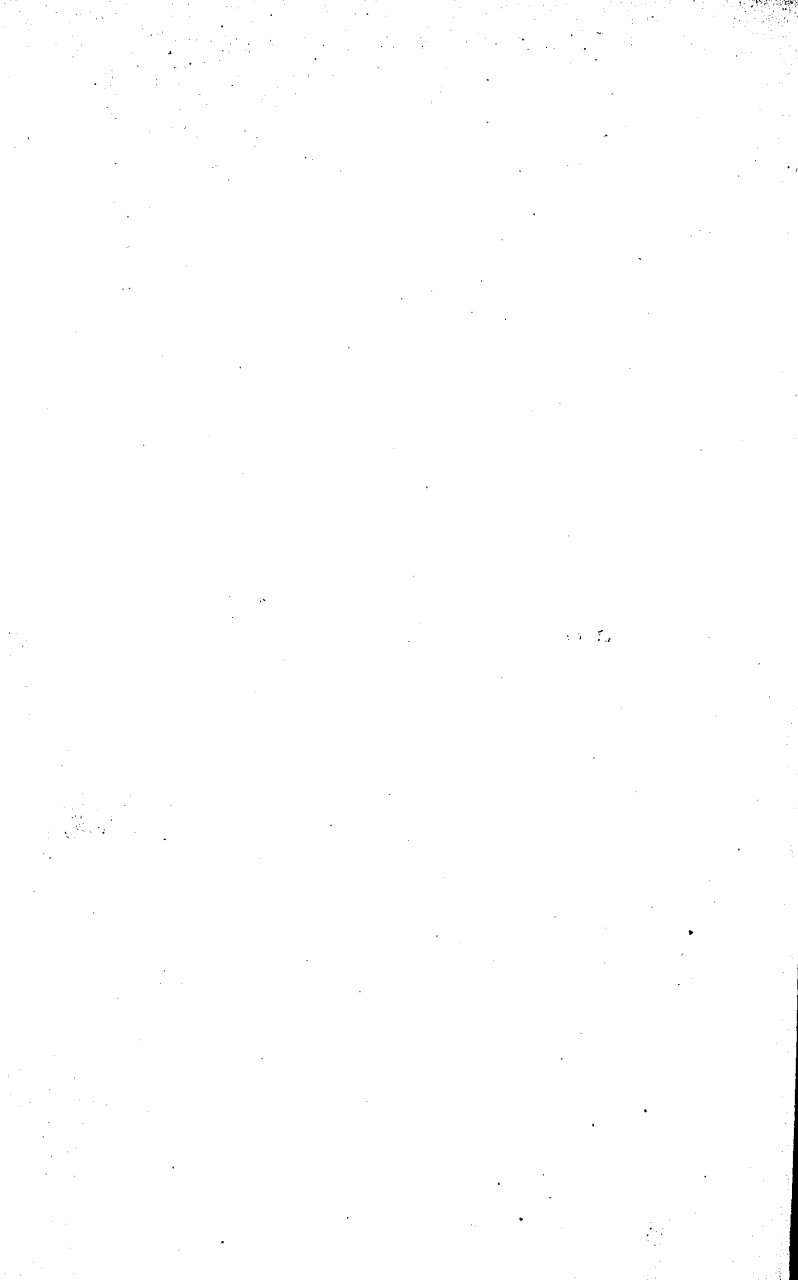
I see now what my work is to be, to go forth carrying His Cross.

Oh, how I love Him! How I will die for Him, my Saviour, my Lord, and my God!

What would I not give for those old days of companionship back again, those days that I misused so cruelly!

And yet, the best of it all is this—that He is closer to me now than ever before, and that I know He will never leave me.

He is my Friend for ever, through death and beyond.  
He lives, and I live for Him.



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